The New REPUBLIC

A Journal of Opinion

VOL. LXXXII NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1935 NUMBER 1055

Contents

The Week 29

Editorials

Planning for Transportation 32
To Control the Traffic in Arms 34

General Articles

A Self-Adjusting Economic System?...J. M. Keynes 35
The Battle of Sacramento.....Bruce Minton 37
Mr. Farley's Stamp Act.....Dan Forrest Taylor 39
Let's Look at the Record.....Hamilton Basso 41
Class Poem (verse).....Horace Gregory 42
Washington Notes..... T. R. B. 43
Other People's Money.....John T. Flynn 44
The Shostakovich Opera.....Paul Rosenfeld 45
Movies: Pay No Attention.....Otis Ferguson 46

Correspondence 47

Mother Broadway.....Stark Young 49

Books in Review

The Long View.....Malcolm Cowley 50
World Under a Bell Jar.....Stuart Chase 51
Jews Into Exile.....Ernest Sutherland Bates 52
Humanizing Mr. Hoover.....Robert Morss Lovett 52
John Dewey's Credo.....Norbert Guterman 53
Primer for Pedants.....Newton Arvin 54
Letters from the Dead.....Byron McGrath 55
Books in Brief 55

The Week

THE purge of the liberals from the Agricultural Adjustment Administration is as revealing as anything that has happened since Roosevelt came to power. The men who have been dismissed or demoted are the very ones who were fighting on behalf of the consumer against the organized forces of business. It was this group that sought to prevent the processors of foods from passing on to the consumer not only the whole cost of the processing taxes but a large additional burden of profit as well. It was they who tried to bring the big milk distributors out into the open where their profits could be compared with their low wages and long hours for labor. They kept insisting on access to distributors' books. This liberal group had fought for standards of quantity and quality in foods, and in regard to certain fundamental products like bread had told consumers the maximum prices they need pay to ensure a legitimate profit to all concerned. Some of the members of this little band had tried to prevent the cotton-restriction scheme from being used to pauperize the tenant farmer.

WE SHALL not pretend to be amazed at the developments in the A.A.A. It has long been clear that Mr. Davis and his allies, the meat packers and milk distributors, *et al.*, would stop the liberals if they could. Whether or not the President gave his consent to this purge, it was an inevitable development of the situation he had created. In the early days of the struggle, he compromised by removing Mr. Peek, the chief enemy of the left group, but simultaneously transferring many codes to the N.R.A. and appointing Mr. Davis, a follower of Peek, as his successor. In the long run either Davis or Frank would have had to go, and since Mr. Roosevelt's main course is determined by the desire to obtain the coöperation of organized business, it was of course Frank who went. That this should have happened under Secretary Wallace, probably the most liberal member of the Cabinet, is a commentary on the workability of the whole New Deal philosophy. Incidentally, the purge has removed from the A.A.A. the most capable lawyers it had.

THE proposals by Governor Eccles of the Federal Reserve Board for a revision of the Federal Reserve system look in the direction of a conscious control of credit policy in the interest of the national economy. He is right in saying that for this purpose more power and responsibility must be centralized in the Federal Reserve Board. It must be a counterpart of the central banks in other countries. The Board must have authority over the open-market policy of the Reserve banks, which is the chief instrument for expanding or contracting reserves, it must have authority over the appointment of Reserve Bank governors, and it must be able to decide what kinds of paper may be rediscounted. So far, so good. The main questions, however, revolve about how these powers will be used, and how effective they can be in aiding stabilization. Though Mr. Eccles does not say so, the plan also involves making the central banking authorities an agency of the government itself. He points out that the volume of money ought to be limited in booms and expanded in depressions, contrary to the usual tendency. But others fear that a govern-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mentally controlled banking policy may, on account of Treasury necessities, be used to expand reserves unduly when they ought to contract. Furthermore, even the best control over the supply of credit may be ineffectual as long as the demand is left free. We are extremely dubious, for reasons that cannot be explained in the space now available, whether credit policy alone can do much good in an unplanned capitalist system.

THE army and navy have now told Congress in detail what they want for the immediate future, and quite a demand it is. A new airplane base at Hawaii is proposed, to cost $11,000,000 and to be, eventually, one of a chain of such bases stretching all the way from Alaska down to Panama, and up through the Caribbean along the Atlantic Coast. An increase in the number of military aircraft is requested to the staggering total of 2,320 planes. To modernize the army, $405,000,000 is requested, involving an increase in personnel from 130,000 to nearly 200,000. It had already been indicated in the President's budget message that the administration approved appropriations of nearly $800,000,000 for the coming year for the army and navy —$180,000,000 more than this year's amount, and $312,000,000 more than last year's. Our expenditures will certainly be close to a billion dollars a year—perhaps more. We read also that A. Mitchell Palmer, the Red Raider of early post-war days, has been dragged from the obscurity of his law practice in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, to write a vast new program for a merchant marine, to be subsidized openly and enormously by the federal Treasury. No thoughtful citizen can read these items without a sinking of the heart. Our militarists, who largely control our government, are exactly like those of every other country. They are pushing us steadily and inexorably toward a war that nobody wants, a war that would do nobody any good, not even, in the long run, the munitions makers and the foreign traders and investors in whose interests our present policies are supposedly pursued.

IN MORE than one American state the machinery of the law today is being used to oppress people whose main crime—and in most cases their only crime—is poverty. In Oklahoma, a statute seventy-five years old has been resurrected to suppress protests by victims of inadequate relief. In Oregon, the criminal-syndicalism law continues to be used, as in California, to imprison strike leaders and anyone else the community considers "dangerous." The two latest victims are Kyle Pugh, who has been given five years in prison, and Edward Denny, whose sentence is two years. The situation in Arkansas has now become an open national scandal. Many thousands of sharecroppers and tenant farmers have been dispossessed by landlords seeking to take advantage of the cotton-restriction scheme. Some of these persons are put to work in the fields at long hours for wages of 50 or 75 cents a day. Others, men, women and children, are simply turned out along the highway—to starve, for all the landlords care. Mary Connor Myers, investigator for the A.A.A., whose report of conditions in that area has thus far been suppressed by Department of Agriculture officials, is known to have compared conditions with those in Belgium during the Great War. It is not surprising that the victims of this treatment should have organized into a Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. The landlords, aided by subservient local officials, have broken up all meetings of this union, have jailed its leaders and are seeking to terrorize its members into accepting starvation conditions. When we reflect that all this is the result of the Roosevelt administration's great humanitarian policy of helping the American farmer, we have something that can be nominated for the Grimmest Joke of the Century.

SENATOR Norris of Nebraska has many achievements to his credit: the fight for government operation of Muscle Shoals, the abolition of lame-duck Congresses, the creation of a one-chamber legislature in his own state—these are three that occur to everyone when his name is mentioned. Now he is embarked upon another venture that, if it is successful, will earn him the thanks of his countrymen. He proposes to take the office of Postmaster General out of politics, and with it the Post Office system as a whole. He would have the Postmaster General appointed by the President, with the approval of the Senate, for a ten-year term. He would be forbidden to hold any position in a political party. All local postmasters and other officials of the system would then be selected by this non-political appointee, on a basis of merit. This would do away with the abuse of the present system which, while it pretends to operate in part under civil-service rules, is in fact so rigged that a competent person who isn't "right" politically never gets the job. That the Norris proposal ought to be supported goes without saying. The Post Office department has always been bad; but it has rarely been so outrageous as it is under Big Jim, the man who would Tammanyize the whole United States if he could.

GREAT BRITAIN appears to be on the verge of a grave political crisis. The Wavetree by-election, with a Labor Party victory in an ultra-conservative stronghold, is an unmistakable symptom of the disintegration of Ramsay MacDonald's National Government. In this election the die-hards behind Winston Churchill, who made their fight on the India Bill, make good their threat that they would place their own candidates in the field. Young Churchill, who ran against the regular government nominee, went down to defeat, but he carried his competitor with him and left the Laborites in possession of the field. It is plain that the insurgent Conservative leaders seek to bring about a break that will end the career of the National Government. If the Conservative Party were as strong as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

its majority in the House of Commons, it would discipline the thirty party rebels who supported young Churchill's campaign. Instead these insurgents were absolved of blame before the election was over and will go forth to sin again with even greater enthusiasm when the next opportunity arises. MacDonald himself—and this adds to the difficulties of the national coalition—has lost his great popularity. Millions of the unemployed are expressing their dissatisfaction in demonstrations so ominous that Oliver Stanley, Minister of Labor, was forced to promise that the dole cuts made in the regulations issued last month would be restored. A few days later the representatives of the unemployed from the Labor benches demanded new scales that would in many cases increase the amount of the dole payments. Riots in Sheffield and other important industrial cities underscored these demands and the Cabinet had to take up the task of completely overhauling unemployment legislation. The dissolution of Parliament is nearer than appeared probable a few months ago. In the election that will follow, the Labor Party has at least a fighting chance of gaining control.

CHANCELLOR Hitler, reports Berlin, has retired to Berchtesgaden in the solitude of the Bavarian Alps to reflect on the attitude to be taken by the Reich toward the coming Anglo-French Aerial Convention. If it were merely a question of foreign policy, the problem would not be a difficult one. Unfortunately for the Chancellor's peace of mind, decisive domestic issues are also involved. He must choose between two powerful groups in the German government. On the one side there are the Reichswehr chiefs under General von Blomberg and the official directors of Germany's foreign policy under Baron von Neurath—backed, in this question, by Air Minister Hermann Göring. Göring undoubtedly made his recent visit to Warsaw to sound out Polish sentiment before Berlin makes her final choice between the Eastern Locarno Pact, plus the Franco-British-Italian understanding, and a continuation of her present policy of bilateral agreements. On the other side are Dr. Alfred Rosenberg, director of the Foreign Department of the National Socialist Party, Dr. Goebbels and Minister of Agriculture Darré, as well as those party members who are contemptuous of "old bankrupt methods of business politics" and insist on a "National Socialist approach" in foreign affairs.

THIS group is using Russia's great army, whose size was revealed at the Soviet Congress last week, as a text for its demand for greater security in the East. It will, however, leave nothing untried to prevent the adoption of von Neurath's policy in favor of an immediate understanding with the Powers along the lines laid down by the Rome-London conversations. The Reichswehr is primarily interested in the legalization of German armaments and looks forward to a satisfactory settlement of this vexing question through the proposed London convention. Hitler leans to the von Neurath group—the Chancellor has always found it wiser to go with the strongest regiments. This does not mean that the Reich government will bow unconditionally to the dictates of the Powers. Berlin will hold out for more favorable terms and, in particular, will demand guarantees in the form of greater armament concessions, squeezing the last possible advantage out of the situation. There will probably be a long period of dickering and bargaining before a settlement is reached.

IN THE strike of 6,000 employees of the National Biscuit Company, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company has appeared in the role of strike-breaker. That, at least, is the logical conclusion to be reached from a letter recently sent to 3,000 of the striking employees in New York City by the National Biscuit Company. It informs the strikers that the Metropolitan has "suggested" that

> you be notified that your privilege of converting your Group Life Insurance Certificate into an individual policy without a medical examination expires thirty-one days after leaving your employment. Your Group Insurance participation ceased when you terminated your employment on January 8.

To the strikers this was, of course, strange news. Of the 3,000, some 2,800 have been working for the National Biscuit Company for six years or more—some as long as thirty-five years. With such service records, they believe that they should still be considered employees of the company and entitled as such to fair treatment. Fortunately, this attempt to break the morale of the National Biscuit Company strikers has failed. The company's plants in New York City, Philadelphia, Newark and Atlanta have been shut down completely for five weeks, except for occasional deliveries by strike-breaking truck drivers. The workers, members of the Inside Bakery Workers' Federal Union, are determined to force National Biscuit to fulfill an agreement made with the union last July. This agreement, made through the Regional Labor Board office in New York City, provided for "equal pay for equal work." The company failed to carry out the necessary wage adjustments for some 200 employees in Philadelphia. Since the early days of the strike, the workers have been willing to arbitrate the equalization of wages, involving only about $20,000 a year. But the National Biscuit Company has steadfastly refused. It hopes, no doubt, that a prolonged lockout will crush the union. Meanwhile, organized labor is rallying to the cause of the bakery workers by sponsoring a boycott of National Biscuit products. It's slogan—until the strike is won—is "You Don't Needa Biscuit."

MR. William Randolph Hearst, in the pages of his New York newspapers, is putting pressure behind a bill introduced in the New York Legislature seek-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing to keep communists out of college. Under the terms of the bill, which might have been written by Mr. Hearst himself, all students will be required to take an oath to support the Constitution and to engage in no radical activities. This proposal will certainly meet with great approval by Mr. Hearst's friends. We think, however, that the gentlemen are missing a few tricks. It might also be advisable to make the students swear that all four of their grand-parents were Aryans; that they believe the Pope is a man named Finkelstein; that they also believe that Christ was not a Jew and that Dr. Goebbels can prove it; that Adolf Hitler is the one and only Holy Ghost. All these whimsical notions are part of the Nazi ideology and since the Sage of San Simeon is so obviously determined to impose that ideology upon America he ought to go the whole hog. One other benefit might also accrue from such a program. It would unquestionably keep a lot of sane young men and women from going to college and thus leave room for Mr. Hearst and most of his employees. Mr. Hearst, indeed, might even manage to finish his academic education and take a degree. He and his henchmen, if they left off Red-baiting for a time, would gain considerable benefit from courses in Common Decency, Honesty, Journalistic Ethics and Fair Play. We are so sure of it that we would be glad to launch a campaign inviting our readers to help pay their tuition.

THE New York State Economic Council, fresh from its discovery of the need for striking the unemployed from the voting lists, has hit upon another and more pressing menace than a few million relief votes. The banks are endangered. The National Industrial Conference Board recently held a referendum among newspaper editors in which one of the questions was: "Would public opinion in your community favor government taking over the banking system?" More than 35 percent answered yes. "This," says the Economic Council in a letter to the bankers, "is the most serious reply on the list. There is real and imminent danger that our banking system may be taken over by the government. It may happen this winter. If it does, America will have crossed the Rubicon. Because if government controls the banks, government will control all business." This is an admission from a high and authoritative source of the power of the banks. It is only unfortunate that the Council failed to tell us who now controls the banks, and therewith "all business." But it is another angle that interests the Council: Why is there such widespread distrust of the banks? "Bankers," the Council answers, "have been silent too long . . . have failed to defend themselves."

IT IS a serious situation, the Council finds. "There is no greater folly than the assertion that government must make concessions to radicals in order to stave off communism. You don't throw a *little* gasoline on a small fire in order to stave off a conflagration. . . . Nearly every night some theorist on the radio urges that the capitalistic system has failed—talks of a new order—glorifies the new deal." Yet there is hope: "The people believe in the inherent soundness of their social order and economic system. Except in banking, only a few of them are ready for a change. The Socialist-Communist plot in the United States—in the meshes of which the federal administration seems now entangled—still has relatively few adherents. There is still time for effective resistance." Quick! the method? Leadership! "The people need only the leadership of responsible men. You bankers once gave that leadership. You can give it again."

Planning for Transportation

UNDER the N.R.A., industries have been organized hastily and by wholesale through codes preceded by a minimum of study and drafted under pressure by employing interests. By contrast, the method of handling the railroad problem is a clear example of the application of intelligence to the problem of public administration of industry. Because the railroads have so long been under regulation, there was already existing at the time of the crisis a large and detailed body of statistical and accounting information, a group of independent, able and strong employee organizations and a trained personnel representing the public interest.

The outstanding public specialist, Mr. Joseph B. Eastman, a man of unquestioned expertness and integrity, was chosen as Coördinator. Under existing conditions he could do little to improve the situation, but he and his staff have spent two years in studying various proposals for basic reorganization, and he now comes out with a report on the industry that makes sense. He outlines the problem and proposes three alternative ways of meeting it, with discussion of their advantages and disadvantages. Congress and the country are now in a position to make an intelligent choice. This is the way and, in our opinion, the only good way, to attack industry planning under the existing economic order.

Mr. Eastman first reports what everybody knows: that the railroads are still suffering from low earnings and unemployment, due both to the depression and to great increase in competition from other means of transportation. His studies have proved also that it is possible to reduce costs and improve service in a number of ways: by eliminating the wastes of duplication, by coördinating rail transportation with motor transportation, by using new types of equipment. But Mr. Eastman does not assume, as the code authorities of so many other industries have done, that the only problem is to increase profits. He is careful to define a social objective. This is:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> A system of transportation for the nation which will supply the most efficient means of transport and furnish service as cheaply as is consistent with fair treatment of labor and with earnings which will support adequate credit and the ability to expand as need develops and to take advantage of all improvements in the art. This system of transportation must be in the hands of reliable and responsible operators whose charges for service will be known, dependable, and reasonable and free from unjust discrimination.

Three major obstacles, apparently, have obstructed progress toward this goal. One is the competition, the unwillingness to coöperate, of railroad managements themselves. The Coördinator can suggest such things as car pooling and joint use of terminals, but he cannot compel the acceptance of suggestions. Another is the fact that operating economies can be made only by giving labor less work, so long as traffic does not expand, and Congress has forbidden that in the law establishing his office. And, we might add, has forbidden it with good reason, for the way to cure a depression is not to create more unemployment and diminish labor income. The existence of strong labor organizations on the roads has made it necessary to consider labor's interest in whatever is done. The third is the fact that railroad companies have not gone through the bankruptcies necessary to cut capital cost. Many cannot pay their charges or obtain new credit under present conditions, and many cannot reasonably hope to do so in the future. And if you can cut neither labor cost nor capital charges, you cannot help the railroads.

The general methods of overcoming these obstacles will be the same, under any of the three suggested plans. First, government must in some way be given the power to compel the railroads to adopt suggestions for greater efficiency. Second, a way must be found to introduce improvements without hardship to labor. Third, financial reorganization must be encouraged, not retarded, by government, and must be brought under strict public control.

Plan No. 1, which under the existing circumstances Mr. Eastman recommends, involves an extension of regulation. The Coördinator's office will be made permament and his function will be a planning one—not to wait, as the Interstate Commerce Commission has done in the past, for evils to arise and objections to be made to them, but to suggest improvements, work out a rational rate structure, attempt to obtain the adoption of his suggestions, and finally to order their adoption, subject to review by the Commission. The Commission itself would be made more effective and less unwieldy by being given a permanent chairman and being departmentalized. Only five men would be directly concerned with railroads. The authority of the Commission would be extended over trucks, buses and pipe lines, thus making possible coördination of all the various types of transport in the country.

The problem of making economies without injury to labor is worked out with great ingenuity. The backbone is an adequate pension system, making possible the retirement of the superannuated. Next comes a dismissal payment for those eliminated before the retirement age, which is in the form of an annuity for the older men and is graduated downward as the dismissed are younger and more capable of finding other jobs. Linked with these will be a system of unemployment insurance. Under these provisions it will be possible to make economies involving reduction of the labor force by retiring older workers without hiring others to take their places. Since the pensions will cost scarcely less than wages, there will be little immediate gain to the roads, but as time goes on the economies will be felt. Even with the cushion, the Coördinator recommends that no drastic measures be taken until traffic and employment begin to expand. A further revision of the bankruptcy law will facilitate reorganization, provided the Reconstruction Finance Corporation does not pile up the indebtedness of companies that cannot quickly recuperate with an upturn of business.

Plan No. 2 involves compulsory consolidation of the railroads into a few large regional units, under a modification of the Prince plan. This would aid the making of economies through centralizing management and would solve some of the financial problems. Mr. Eastman, however, rejects it, since it would not go far enough in eliminating competition without a countrywide unification and would create large private concerns difficult to control in the public interest. It is, in his opinion, the worst plan of the three.

Plan No. 3 is of course complete public ownership and operation. Its advantages are great, since it would make possible all desirable economies and at once rehabilitate the roads' credit. Responsibility would be centralized; we should not have the anomalous situation of public representatives trying to persuade private interests to do things they do not want to do. Mr. Eastman does not see in public ownership the dangers ordinarily attributed to it, if the scheme of administration that he outlines were followed. A publicly owned corporation, divorced from politics, could provide efficient management. He does, however, see other disadvantages at present, which makes him reject the plan for the time being. It would involve a great expansion of the public debt at a time when that debt is large and must be further increased for other purposes. The courts are likely to favor owners in deciding how much the government must pay, and thus threaten the future solvency of the system. Congress might, in setting up the system, reflect various pressures for uneconomic rates, or forbid necessary economies, or stipulate unnecessarily large expenditures for the system, which would create deficits embarrassing to a new management. Not until public opinion in favor of governmnt ownership is powerful enough to make sure that the management will be given

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

an absolutely free hand could these dangers be avoided.

Plan 1 is therefore chosen, but with full appreciation of its defects. If it is to work, the private managements must be more coöperative and intelligent than they have been in the past. They must not obstruct the Coördinator's work or cause long delays by fighting his orders in the courts. Public ownership, Mr. Eastman says, will be the only alternative if this happens. Doubtless he believes also that if the existing managements do not go along, the popular support necessary for a successful inauguration of public ownership will be aroused by their sabotage.

The most important conclusion of all is one that Mr. Eastman does not express, except by implication. While much can be done by reorganization of the transportation industry itself, that will not be enough without a general expansion of production and employment. Without this, the necessary economies cannot be made without increasing the total of unemployment, and the credit difficulties cannot be permanently solved, no matter what the plan adopted. The same is true of almost every other important industry. Even the best economic planning for separate industries is not enough. Indeed, in a capitalist economy, it may actually make conditions worse.

To Control the Traffic in Arms

DESPITE the revelations made by the Senate investigation of the munitions business, no new proposals for legislation have as yet grown out of them. The only pending measures both antedate the investigation. One of these is the Geneva convention of 1925, with the American substitute for it; the other is the arms-embargo resolution.

The Geneva convention provides for licenses for, and full publicity regarding, export of arms—and exports only. The Senate has ratified this convention, subject to its ratification by nine other nations. It was passed on the last hurried day of the spring, 1934, session—with one singular reservation. Senator King of Utah was the author of this reservation, which declares that an adherence to this treaty "shall not be construed as denying any right or sovereignty which the Kingdom of Persia may have in or to the Persian Gulf or the waters thereof." This runs counter to the claim of Great Britain, embodied in the convention, to control these waters for the purpose of preventing shipments of arms via Persia or Afghanistan and the border tribes of India. Persia has vigorously contested this British claim. It is assumed that the King reservation will block further progress of the convention, as Great Britain will undoubtedly refuse to ratify a treaty containing such a provision. President Roosevelt, who originally recommended passage of the unamended text, has never signed it. This is the impasse that now confronts the convention of 1935.

Whatever Senator King's motive in introducing the reservation and the President's in withholding his signature, the administration has taken another step towards arms control. On November 20, the United States offered, through Minister Hugh Wilson in Geneva, a full detailed draft of a treaty covering not only the licensing of and publicity for the export of arms, as did the convention of 1925, but in addition, manufacture and imports. The aviation section, however, leaves a large loophole for war planes to escape control as civil planes.

Concretely this treaty means that, in case of full ratification, private manufacturers of arms will be given five-year licenses and governments will be bound to inform Geneva of all such licenses and all arms items in their export and import trade. A permanent commission, composed of one representative of each signatory power, could make a special investigation in any country if a violation were charged, in addition to its regular inspections. Even with this larger scope, the Hugh Wilson treaty has no provision for enforcement. In effect, it amounts only to publicity in a fuller form than the Geneva convention. It has thus far been greeted by a notable lack of enthusiasm in Europe.

Hanging suspended between these measures is the arms-embargo plan. Backed by President Hoover and originally intended to be used to stop export of arms to an "aggressor" nation, it has been amended by the Senate in the present administration so as to include all warring nations in any international conflict. At the time of its consideration by Congress, President Roosevelt, like President Hoover, apparently clung to the idea of an "aggressor" nation, while the Senate took the view that an embargo should be applied impartially. With this divergence of opinions, the bill remained unratified, while a test case arose to challenge its efficacy. Last spring President Roosevelt, with the consent of Congress, placed a ban on all arms to both Paraguay and Bolivia, engaged in the Chaco war. So far this embargo has proved such a failure, largely due to the non-coöperation of other nations, that it seems unlikely that the arms-embargo bill will proceed further. And there the matter rests.

THE NEW REPUBLIC

PUBLISHED WEEKLY AND COPYRIGHT, 1935, IN THE U. S., BY THE NEW REPUBLIC, INC., 40 EAST 49TH STREET, NEW YORK CITY. BRUCE BLIVEN, PRESIDENT, DANIEL MEBANE, TREASURER.

EDITORS

BRUCE BLIVEN MALCOLM COWLEY R. M. LOVETT
GEORGE SOULE STARK YOUNG

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

H. N. BRAILSFORD JOHN DEWEY JOHN T. FLYNN
WALDO FRANK E. C. LINDEMAN W. P. MANGOLD
LEWIS MUMFORD GILBERT SELDES R. G. TUGWELL

RATES: SINGLE COPIES, FIFTEEN CENTS; YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, FIVE DOLLARS; CANADIAN, FIVE DOLLARS AND FIFTY CENTS; FOREIGN, SIX DOLLARS; THREE MONTHS' TRIAL, ONE DOLLAR.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A Self-Adjusting Economic System?[1]

I WAS asked recently to take part in a discussion among English economists on the problem of poverty in the midst of potential plenty, which none of us can deny is the outstanding conundrum of today. We all agreed that, whatever the best remedy may be, we must reject all those alleged remedies that consist, in effect, in getting rid of the plenty. It may be true, for various reasons, that as the potential plenty increases, the problem of getting the fruits of it distributed to the great body of consumers will present increasing difficulties. But it is to the analysis and solution of these difficulties that we must direct our minds. To seek an escape by making the productive machine less productive must be wrong. I often find myself in favor of measures to restrict output as a temporary palliative or to meet an emergency. But the temper of mind that turns too easily to restriction is dangerous, for it has nothing useful to contribute to the permanent solution. But this is another way of saying that we must not regard the conditions of supply—that is to say, our facilities to produce—as being the fundamental source of our troubles. And, if this is agreed, it seems to follow that it is the conditions of demand that our diagnosis must search and probe for the explanation.

Up to this point of the argument, as I have said, we were all in substantial agreement. Each one of us was ready to find the major part of our explanation in some factor that relates to the conditions of demand. But, though we all started out in the same direction, we soon parted company into two main groups. What made the cleavage that thus divided us?

On the one side were those who believed that the existing economic system is in the long run self-adjusting, though with creaks and groans and jerks, and interrupted by time-lags, outside interference and mistakes. One adherent of this school of thought laid stress on the increasing difficulty of rapid self-adjustment to change in an environment where population and markets are no longer expanding rapidly. Another stressed the growing tendency for outside interference to hinder the processes of self-adjustment, while a third stressed the effect of business mistakes under the influence of the uncertainty and the false expectations caused by the faults of post-war monetary systems. These economists did not, of course, believe that the system is automatic or immediately self-adjusting, but they did maintain that it has an inherent tendency towards self-adjustment, if it is not interfered with, and if the action of change and chance is not too rapid.

Those on the other side of the gulf, however, rejected the idea that the existing economic system is, in any significant sense, self-adjusting. They believed that the failure of effective demand to reach the full potentialities of supply, in spite of human psychological demand being immensely far from satisfied for the vast majority of individuals, is due to much more fundamental causes. One of them stressed the great inequality of incomes, which causes a separation between the power to consume and the desire to consume. Another believed that the great resources at the disposal of the entrepreneur are a chronic cause of his setting up plant capable of producing more than the limited resources of the consumer can absorb. A third, not disagreeing with these two, demanded some method of increasing consumer power so as to overcome the difficulties they pointed out.

The gulf between these two schools of thought is deeper, I believe, than most of those on either side of it realize. On which side does the essential truth lie?

The strength of the self-adjusting school depends on its having behind it almost the whole body of organized economic thinking and doctrine of the last hundred years. This is a formidable power. It is the product of acute minds and has persuaded and convinced the great majority of the intelligent and disinterested persons who have studied it. It has vast prestige and a more far-reaching influence than is obvious. For it lies behind the education and the habitual modes of thought, not only of economists but of bankers and business men and civil servants and politicians of all parties. The essential elements in it are fervently accepted by Marxists. Indeed, Marxism is a highly plausible inference from Ricardian economics that capitalistic individualism cannot possibly work in practice. So much so, that, if Ricardian economics were to fall, an essential prop to the intellectual foundations of Marxism would fall with it.

Thus, if the heretics on the other side of the gulf are to demolish the forces of nineteenth-century orthodoxy—and I include Marxism in orthodoxy equally with laissez-faire, these two being the nineteenth-century twins of Say and Ricardo—they must attack them in their citadel. No successful attack has yet been made. The heretics of today are the descendants of a long line of heretics who, overwhelmed but never extinguished, have survived as isolated groups of cranks. They are deeply dissatisfied. They believe that common observation is enough to show that facts do not conform to

[1] This article is the third of a special group by various writers, prepared at the invitation of The New Republic in commemoration of its twentieth anniversary. The fourth in the group, to appear soon, is "In Retrospect," by H. N. Brailsford.—The Editors.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the orthodox reasoning. They propose remedies prompted by instinct, by flair, by practical good sense, by experience of the world—half-right, most of them, and half-wrong. Contemporary discontents have given them a volume of popular support and an opportunity for propagating their ideas such as they have not had for several generations. But they have made no impression on the citadel. Indeed, many of them themselves accept the orthodox premises; and it is only because their flair is stronger than their logic that they do not accept its conclusions.

Now *I* range myself with the heretics. I believe their flair and their instinct move them towards the right conclusion. But I was brought up in the citadel and I recognize its power and might. A large part of the established body of economic doctrine I cannot but accept as broadly correct. I do not doubt it. For me, therefore, it is impossible to rest satisfied until I can put my finger on the flaw in the part of the orthodox reasoning that leads to the conclusions that for various reasons seem to me to be inacceptable. I believe that I am on my way to do so. There is, I am convinced, a fatal flaw in that part of the orthodox reasoning that deals with the theory of what determines the level of effective demand and the volume of aggregate employment; the flaw being largely due to the failure of the classical doctrine to develop a satisfactory and realistic theory of the rate of interest.

Put very briefly, the point is something like this. Any individual, if he finds himself with a certain income, will, according to his habits, his tastes and his motives towards prudence, spend a portion of it on consumption and the rest he will save. If his income increases, he will almost certainly consume more than before, but it is highly probable that he will also save more. That is to say, he will not increase his consumption by the full amount of the increase in his income. Thus if a given national income is less equally divided, or if the national income increases so that individual incomes are greater than before, the gap between total incomes and the total expenditure on consumption is likely to widen. But incomes can be generated only by producing goods for consumption or by producing goods for use as capital. Thus the gap between total incomes and expenditure on consumption *cannot* be greater than the amount of new capital that it is thought worth while to produce. Consequently, our habit of withholding from consumption an increasing sum as our incomes increase means that it is impossible for our incomes to increase unless either we change our habits so as to consume more or the business world calculates that it is worth while to produce more capital goods. For, failing both these alternatives, the increased employment and output, by which alone increased incomes can be generated, will prove unprofitable and will not persist.

Now the school that believes in self-adjustment is, in fact, assuming that the rate of interest adjusts itself more or less automatically, so as to encourage just the right amount of production of capital goods to keep our incomes at the maximum level that our energies and our organization and our knowledge of how to produce efficiently are capable of providing. This is, however, pure assumption. There is no theoretical reason for believing it to be true. A very moderate amount of observation of the facts, unclouded by preconceptions, is sufficient to show that they do not bear it out. Those standing on my side of the gulf, whom I have ventured to describe as half-right and half-wrong, have perceived this; and they conclude that the only remedy is for us to change the distribution of wealth and modify our habits in such a way as to increase our propensity to spend our incomes on current consumption. I agree with them in thinking that this would be a remedy. But I disagree with them when they go further and argue that it is the only remedy. For there is an alternative, namely, to increase the output of capital goods by reducing the rate of interest and in other ways.

When the rate of interest has fallen to a very low figure and has remained there sufficiently long to show that there is no further capital construction worth doing even at that low rate, then I should agree that the facts point to the necessity of drastic social changes directed towards increasing consumption. For it would be clear that we already had as great a stock of capital as we could usefully employ.

Even as things are, there is a strong presumption that a greater equality of incomes would lead to increased employment and greater aggregate income. But hitherto the rate of interest has been too high to allow us to have all the capital goods, particularly houses, that would be useful to us. Thus, at present, it is important to maintain a careful balance between stimulating consumption and stimulating investment. Economic welfare and social well-being will be increased in the long run by a policy that tends to make capital goods so abundant that the reward that can be gained from owning them falls to so modest a figure as to be no longer a serious burden on anyone. The right course is to get rid of the scarcity of capital goods —which will rid us at the same time of most of the evils of capitalism—while also moving in the direction of increasing the share of income falling to those whose economic welfare will gain most by their having the chance to consume more.

None of this, however, will happen by itself or of its own accord. The system is not self-adjusting, and, without purposive direction, it is incapable of translating our actual poverty into our potential plenty.

If the basic system of thought on which the orthodox school relies is in its essentials unassailable, then there is no escape from their broad conclusions, namely, that, while there are increasingly perplexing problems and plenty of opportunities to make

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

disastrous mistakes, yet nevertheless we must keep our heads and depend on the ultimate soundness of the traditional teaching—the proposals of the heretics, however plausible and even advantageous in the short run, being essentially superficial and ultimately dangerous. Only if they are successfully attacked in the citadel can we reasonably ask them to look at the problem in a radically new way.

Meanwhile, I hope we shall await, with what patience we can command, a successful outcome of the great activity of thought among economists today—a fever of activity such as has not been known for a century. We are, in my very confident belief—a belief, I fear, shared by few, either on the right or on the left—at one of those uncommon junctures of human affairs where we can be saved by the solution of an intellectual problem, and in no other way. If we know the whole truth already, we shall not succeed indefinitely in avoiding a clash of human passions seeking an escape from the intolerable. But I have a better hope.

J. M. KEYNES.

The Battle of Sacramento

THE TRIAL of seventeen workers for Criminal Syndicalism now taking place in Sacramento has been under way for over a month and promises to drag on indefinitely. The special prosecutors have droned through Communist literature, mispronouncing words, stumbling over sentences, selecting passages here and there from the stacks of pamphlets that litter the tables. Sometimes they content themselves with reading a sentence, or a phrase, or even disconnected words. They are concerned only with convincing a small-town jury that the Communist Party has been guilty of violating the California Criminal Syndicalism Act. They are interested in sentencing seventeen workers to from four to fifty-six years each in the penitentiary because these workers have been active in the labor movement and, at the same time, are members of the Communist Party.

The arrest of these men and women took place during the wave of terror that swept California immediately after the San Francisco general strike. Vigilantes terrorized cities and towns, breaking into private homes, beating, kidnaping, destroying, burning. In Sacramento, the Red Squad rounded up every militant worker. They charged them with vagrancy, which in the case of the seventeen now on trial was almost at once augmented by the far more serious indictment for criminal syndicalism. The seventeen were selected deliberately. They had been guilty of organizing agricultural laborers in the rich valleys of California, organizing them into the militant Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union, which demanded a living wage and better working conditions for Mexican and white fruit-pickers, cotton-pickers, pea-pickers and field-workers. These seventeen men and women had gone so far as to urge the revolutionary innovation that the employers be forced to provide a supply of uncontaminated drinking water in the fields during the long, blistering days. They actually formed a union that included Mexicans and whites! The owners were horrified. But despite their horror, the union continued to grow and in 1933 staged militant strikes that involved over 50,000 laborers and that won basic improvements throughout the valleys. Clearly, these seventeen organizers were dangerous.

The state authorities, coöperating with the power trust, the powerful banks and the Associated Farmers, made various unsuccessful attempts to smash the union. Vigilante groups formed and promised to drive the Reds out of California. They beat and kidnaped, arrested and shot. In one town, four strikers were murdered in cold blood as they walked along the street. Still the union grew. The "patriots" could not halt the militant organizing of the seventeen; of Caroline Decker, twenty-one-year-old girl, of Jack Warnick and all the others. But when the San Francisco general strike unleashed a statewide anti-Red hysteria, the state authorities saw their chance. They rounded up the union leaders, charged them with vagrancy and then looked about for a way to keep them in jail.

The first move was to set bail so high that it was impossible to raise funds to release the workers. They were denied fruit and vegetables, exercise and light. And the District Attorney remembered the Criminal Syndicalism Act, passed in 1919 during the Red-baiting days and used since then as the most valuable weapon against the militant labor movement. The law is sufficiently vague to convict without much evidence. A worker can be sentenced to a long term in San Quentin for what he *thinks*, for participation in a strike, for belonging to a radical union or party. District Attorney Neil McAllister of Sacramento accordingly indicted the seventeen under the provisions of the Act, and announced that now at last he could assure the landowners and the corporations that they would not cause further trouble for a good long time.

The seventeen remained in jail while McAllister campaigned for reëlection. He was opposed by Otis Babcock, a country liberal who intimated that if he were elected he would not press charges against the radicals. McAllister went down to an overwhelming defeat. His patriotic zeal, which expressed itself by railroading workers to jail because they had won major concessions for agricultural

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

laborers, did not appeal to the majority of Sacramento citizens. But McAllister still had several months in office: he decided, with the full support of the Sacramento press, to continue his mission of convicting Reds and so making the agricultural fields safe for wage cuts and vigilantes.

Finally, the jury was sworn in and seated. McAllister had done his job well. No workers, no young people, no professional men sat on the final panel. Instead, the jury was composed of such impartial citizens as the cousin of a local constable; the mother of a local policeman; members of the Elks and Masons (both organizations passed resolutions against the Communist Party); retired employees of the State Adjutant General's office; and so on.

The trial commenced. Leo Gallagher, attorney for the International Labor Defense, represented ten of the workers. Six others defended themselves with his assistance. The remaining defendant, Norman Mini, enlisted the aid of a local lawyer and later persuaded Albert Goldman to join his defense. The selection of the jury dragged on for over a month. Meanwhile McAllister bolstered his lamentably weak case against the seventeen by concocting two new charges: he claimed that the Communists had attempted to kidnap his star witness, one William Hanks, alias Banks, and that the defense was guilty of jury tampering. On investigation, it turned out that the "kidnaped" Hanks had left town on orders from the District Attorney's office, and that while held by the "kidnapers," Hanks had been able to visit his sister in Nevada and later accompany her to Salt Lake City. The jury tampering proved to be a vigilante attempt to intimidate jurors and to turn public opinion against the defendants.

The time to present evidence against the seventeen had arrived. Simultaneously, McAllister's term of office was over. The liberal Babcock took over the prosecution and asked for a week's postponement. At this point, Attorney General U. S. Webb stepped into the picture. Mr. Webb had been subjugated to a little high-power pressure from the newspapers and the corporations that feared Babcock's mild approach. The financial powers in the agricultural districts wanted to be sure that the seventeen labor leaders did not slip through their fingers. They told Webb that they wanted McAllister retained as special prosecutor. Under recently acquired powers, Webb displaced the newly elected prosecutor and appointed McAllister, seeing to it that McAllister received a handsome salary. To make doubly sure that the prosecution would not fall down on the job of putting the seventeen behind bars where they could no longer cause trouble to California employers and landlords, "Red" Hynes, head of the Los Angeles Red Squad, was imported to act as prosecution authority on communism. Hynes has a long established record as an expert on strong-arm methods, on terrorism, on the third degree, which he has developed to a fine art and through which he learned what he knows about the theories of communism. He will be the intellectual backbone of the prosecution.

But Hynes and McAllister, pamphlets and kidnaping scares and jury intimidations do not complete the forces arrayed against the seventeen. The press —particularly the Hearst papers—has done its best to stir up hatred against the defendants. Now is the time to smash the militant unions. With the left-wing militants disposed of, it will be easier to crush the trade unions, easier to rid the agricultural fields of trouble-makers (men who strike and lead strikes), easier for the newspapers to rid themselves of the troublesome Guild. The press is vociferous in its support of McAllister. The American Legion, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Associated Farmers, tag along, send representatives to court, offer the prosecution advice and evidence and moral support. All the patriotteering organizations, and behind them the big companies that depend on agriculture for their profits, are whipping up the Red scare and egging on the vigilantes.

The trial is an experiment in fascist methods. California is closer to fascism than any other state. It is no longer a theoretical question, no longer a matter of fascist tendencies. The terror that followed the general strike goes on. Private homes continue to be raided by posses without search warrants. Telephones are tapped, mail is opened, liberals who appear in Sacramento are shadowed. Every town, every city has its vigilante organization, its "Nationals" that are prepared to repulse imaginary communist armies and that keep in training by breaking up meetings and beating workers who protest. In Sacramento, the City Manager had himself appointed Captain of Police. He used his new office to create 500 special deputies, arming them, teaching them how to use tear gas and nauseating gas in order to repulse a threatened meeting of unemployed that desired to petition the Legislature. The trial of the seventeen workers takes place in this atmosphere, with the Legislature in session a few blocks away, discussing every type of repressive bill that it is possible to conceive. "Americanism" bills they are called—measures that are supposed to forward prosperity by breaking the trade unions; bills that make it a felony to hold or attend any meeting not expressly approved by the police; bills that forbid printing or distributing or even reading literature that the authorities do not sanction; bills that would set up identification bureaus where radicals and workers could be fingerprinted; bills that restrict freedom of thought and expression in schools and universities; bills that provide for burning of books; a bill to outlaw the Communist Party.

California is today the testing ground for fascism in this country. If the present program of oppression and terrorism can be launched with active success in California, it can be utilized in other

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

states as well. The trial of the seventeen sets a precedent in methods of putting militant labor in its place. Their conviction (even though the decision might be reversed by an appeal) will initiate the drive to use the Criminal Syndicalism Act against all workers, whether radical, militant or conservative. Twenty states have laws similar to the California statute—the weapon is already there. In California, the conviction of the seventeen will encourage the Legislature to pass the proposed bills now under consideration. If the drive in California succeeds, similar steps will be taken throughout the nation, wherever labor disputes crystalize, whenever industrial or agricultural workers attempt to bargain collectively and threaten to strike.

The trial in Sacramento involves fundamental civil liberties—the right to organize, to strike, to join those radical parties, which though legal in California and permitted to place candidates for office on the ballot, are nevertheless treated by state authorities as out-and-out illegal movements. It is obvious that all who value civil liberties should aid the seventeen organizers by contributing funds that are badly needed for the defense and by joining protest. Thousands of other persons are involved.[1]

BRUCE MINTON.

Mr. Farley's Stamp Act

THE UNCANNY genius of Postmaster General James A. Farley for getting into trouble has landed him in the midst of another scandal—and, of all things, a scandal about stamps. It is one of those things that only General Jim could have done. It is a bust and a blunder and a bonehead play—and a remarkable illustration of what happens in the average American politician's mind.

Before the days of his present eminence, when he was on the make, they used to call the General a good guy. Being a good guy got him where he is. The General knew it and so, when he became head of the government's stamp department, he decided to keep on being a good guy. It meant votes and votes are what count at the moment and General Jim is a man of considerable ambition. So it was not unnatural for him to start being a good guy with stamps.

He started off producing freak sheets of stamps for President Roosevelt, a philatelist of no mean standing. Then, to carry on the good work, he had a few freak sheets printed for Mr. Howe, the President's secretary, and a few other friends. It was the business of other friends that got him into trouble. An unperforated sheet of Mother's Day stamps turned up in Norfolk, Virginia. Its value was estimated at around $20,000. The millions of stamp collectors in this country set up long and loud individual and collective howls. The howls were eventually heard in Washington and Representative Charles D. Millard, who apparently is one of those unreconstructed Republicans objecting to the high-handed manner of the General, announced that he would seek a congressional investigation. At the present moment, with the hounds at his heels, the General is reported to have announced that he won't do it again. Instead, to make up for his carelessness in sending small-sized fortunes to a few of his friends, he will henceforth send out sheets to a lot of people. He is still anxious, what with hoping to become Governor of New York, to continue being a good guy; Big Jim Farley, the man who never forgets a friend.

Since Farley has occupied the chair of Postmaster General, there have been seventeen commemorative stamps. The affair of the commemorative stamps is especially interesting because the public does not generally realize that the printing of these stamps is one of the most profitable businesses conducted by the government. The basis for this handsome profit lies solely in the fact that from four to five million persons in this country are stamp-collecting addicts, people who snap up special issues almost as fast as they are printed, thus creating a tremendous reserve that is never used. The devotees consist of a huge group of postal employees, stamp-collecting companies and dealers, and a number of young and old collectors in this country, as well as millions outside of it. They collect for amusement or profit, but all buy the commemoratives in quantities ranging from squares of four to whole sheets, saving them several years in the hope that their value will double or treble, or at least increase much faster than would ever be the case with an equal amount of money in a bank.

Then again, to make the game more interesting, mistakes are sometimes committed by the printers —such as using a wrong shade of ink on a few hundred of an issue, a flaw in the die, or, more rarely, the inversion of the central picture—which render a stamp exceedingly valuable. Errors such as these keep collectors and dealers throughout the entire world constantly on the lookout, many of them buying hundreds of an issue, only to lay them aside. Meanwhile the government, winking at the ease of the money-making, credits the sales to pure profit and prints another hundred million, which will vanish inside of two weeks. This is an unadulterated fact. In a first week of selling, the public will buy more than fifty million commemorative stamps.

[1] Contributions to the defense of the seventeen on trial in Sacramento can be sent to Dr. George Hedley of the American Civil Liberties Union, Mills Building, San Francisco.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For example, take the Olympic Winter Games Stamp of 1932, commonly called the Lake Placid issue. It pictured a ski-jumper in a ridiculous and clumsy posture that he would never assume intentionally. The government's first supply of these stamps was very small—only 25,000,000—but they were bought up so quickly that another issue of the same number had to be rushed out.

As a rule, issues of commemoratives average from ten to fifteen millions—about two or three times the number of collectors who desire them—while a very few run into the billions. Beginning with the Columbian Exposition commemorative of 1893, these special stamps were issued on an average of once every three years till 1919, the year of the Victory Stamp. From that time on they continued on an average of once a year till 1928, through the reign of Harry S. New as Postmaster General (1923-28). It was this final year, 1928, which marked the beginning of the United States government's realization of the profits to be gained from the sale of commemorative stamps. One was issued called the Molly Pitcher Stamp, an ordinary two-cent Washington, with the name of the Revolutionary heroine merely printed across it. It was an inexpensive method of raising many hundreds of thousands of dollars from collectors, as well as proving the advisability of issuing commemorative stamps. In this same year also appeared the Battle of Monmouth, Valley Forge and International Aeronautics Conference Stamps.

The year 1929 saw the George Rogers Clark Stamp, Edison Stamp, Sullivan Expedition Stamp, Battle of Fallen Timbers and the Ohio River Colonization Stamps, the majority of them commemorating events that few knew anything about. In 1930, the government issued the von Steuben and Battle of Braddock's Field Stamps, the Carolina-Charleston and the Massachusetts Bay Colony Stamps, all perhaps an attempt to influence the sale of American history books.

By 1931, the ingenious Walter F. Brown, then Postmaster General, began to run out of ideas for his new stamps. Washington bureaucrats and intelligent congressmen ransacked the Congressional Library in a frantic endeavor to find something to commemorate. Innumerable brainstorms must have resulted before they printed 100,000,000 stamps bearing a two-cent likeness of the Polish patriot Pulaski. Later in the year came the Red Cross issue, just to prove that the government's heart, or someone's pocketbook, was in the right place. It represented a kneeling nurse dressed in black, and was received with much enthusiasm. Also in that year, the Yorktown Commemorative Stamp was issued.

The year 1932 saw the issuance of the twelve famous portrait stamps of George Washington, selling for an entire year in celebration of the Sol Bloom Anniversary. Also in 1932 there appeared the Daniel Webster, William Penn and the Olympic Games Stamps. But the most astonishing of them all was the Arbor Day Stamp of 1932, a picture of two children standing beside a twiglet.

The next year, 1933, saw one of the country's few beautiful stamps, the Georgia Bicentennial. Next to make its debut was the Newburgh Headquarters of Washington, followed quickly by the Century of Progress and the Byrd Stamp, the latter printed for the mail going down to Little America. Only 10,000,000 Byrd Stamps were placed on sale, and they went immediately to collectors. Another was the "Graf Zeppelin" 50-cent stamp for the South American flight. The price of these was $25 a sheet, and many collecting companies bought several sheets at a time. These last two, by the way, were sold only in Washington, where they could be obtained from the government's Philatelic Agency by paying the extra mailing and registering charges.

Most famous of the special stamps was the N.R.A. Stamp, whose propagandism aroused much comment for two reasons: it carried not the slightest suggestion of the Blue Eagle, and the business man—or the banker—was out of step with the other three marchers and was looking in a different direction.

Then along came another amazing issue, the Kosciusko five-cent stamp, near the end of 1933. The object of this stamp was to impress Poland once again with the honor America paid her countrymen. But back at home, dealers and officials fumed at this waste of material and another general so soon after Pulaski. It was carrying government unoriginality too far. In the words of a famous California collector and dealer, "The entire thing is becoming nonsense. If a stamp is to be struck off for every foreign volunteer who fought in the Revolutionary War, it will take dozens of years for the hundreds of them. I think it will not be long before the government will put a stop to this taxing of thousands of dealers throughout the country."

He was speaking for the little trader who has to buy these stamps and must hold all of them until there is a demand for them from the huge number of collectors. Then he sells at what is generally a very slight increase in value. Of course the more common a stamp becomes, the less it is worth.

The United States Government will probably never discontinue commemorative stamps. It has no intention of losing a penny of this money that flows so smoothly into its coffers. The stamps are not only legal, but interesting, and an increasing number will make their appearance every year. United States citizens are beginning to look forward to them with interest, though it is hardly to be expected that they will stimulate travel or add an ounce to the volume of mail. Witness the 1934 Commemoratives: the Wisconsin Tercentenary, the Mother's Day Stamp, supposed to help florists, railroads, telegraph companies, etc., the Ark and the Dove issue of Maryland and the eight National Park stamps. Now the administration lets out the news that it may change all of its stamps, commemoratives and regular issues, to landscapes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Whenever new rulers have taken over a government, postage stamps have been one of the first things to be changed. In fact, as various people have already suggested, Mr. Farley, whose head is not entirely empty, has stumbled upon a happy little system for inflation by means of the printing press. It is a kind of inflation, furthermore, that does not upset the hard-money boys. If he can just print enough stamps and sell them—or even give them away to people who will promise to sell them to other people—it will provide considerable grease for the wheels of industry. It may even be a way of pushing the country around that Famous Corner. Well, why not? DAN FORREST TAYLOR.

Let's Look at the Record[1]

THESE volumes, bound in paper and quarto size, are part of a daily series now being issued by the United States government. You may have them, free of charge, by writing to your Senator or Representative. I know a man in the mountains of North Carolina, Scotch and thrifty, who says they are fine for starting fires, but I think they have a greater value than that. Senators and Representatives have a great fondness for talking about themselves and sometimes, in the excitement of the moment, they make very revealing statements indeed. It is interesting, for instance, even if unimportant, to know that Representative Fish of New York thinks that the lungs of congressmen should be protected from the soot of Washington and that Senator Bailey of North Carolina ("Our Bob") is not afraid of going to war with Japan because Japan would stand as much chance with us as a mouse in the jaws of a cat or maybe even a bulldog.

Take, also, my friend Mr. Huey P. Long. I call Mr. Long my friend only because of our long acquaintance with each other. He once had me ushered out of his hotel room very unceremoniously and once I was arrested by his National Guard, but I do not hold that against him. I have the greatest appreciation for his talents. Only Mr. Long could contrive, in a speech against the World Court, to introduce the following bit of Americana:

> Back in the country where I come from, Mr. President, which the world has now learned to be about the best part of our country, we have what we call in the country there camp meetings, revival meetings, where when the spiritual life gets low in the community, we would get some good high-sounding revivalist to come in there and preach hell-fire and damnation until he scared the country up again, and then he would move on with the hope that the people would be better. Well, everybody went to those protracted meetings up there around the parish of Jackson. We did not know how to take care of the young ones. Our mothers and all the women folk went to those camp meetings the same as the men folk. They did not have many servants, so they took their babies along in their arms—sometimes two babies—and they spread them out there on the ground among the crowd, listening to the gospel preached, and now and then having to feed a young one. Well most of those meetings were held in the summertime and one of the young ones would get tired and hot and fretted and begin to cry and disturb the preacher. We had a little composition that we made up. We took a little biscuit, a little butter, a little sugar, mixed them up together, the crumbs of the biscuit with the butter and the sugar, tied it up in a little rag and tied a string around it. We called that a "sugar-tit."
>
> We put it in the baby's mouth and kept him quiet awhile. And after a little while the baby would get contented and pacified and fall off to sleep with the sugar-teat in its mouth. We knew nothing about the germ theory. We never heard that there was such a thing as contagion or contracting these dreaded diseases the one from the other; and so, while one child would lie there asleep pacified by a sugar-teat, another young one would break out, and we would take that sugar-teat out of the mouth of the child that was asleep and put it in the other one's mouth and quiet him with it and then go on with the preaching. And that would happen on and on from child to child until perhaps we would quiet five or six of them with one sugar-teat. And, as the Senator from Oklahoma [Mr. Gore] says, "fighting the flies in the meantime."

I have never met Representative John H. Hoeppel of California, but I would like to. It was Representative Hoeppel, in case you do not remember, who acted as godfather to the Townsend Plan. He explained the plan to his colleagues for a long time. Representative Blanton of Texas objected to it on the ground that the United States could not possibly raise the $24,000,000,000 that some actuaries say the plan would cost. Other congressmen opposed it because it required an enormous sales tax. To these objections Representative Hoeppel replied that a sales tax was not absolutely necessary; that the money might be derived by the socialization of banking and credit and that it might be expedient to start off the pensions at $100 a month. At this point he was interrupted:

> Mr. Hoeppel: I yield.
>
> Mr. Boileau: I do not desire to be critical of the gentleman's remarks, but the gentleman has named an entirely different method of financing from the one the Townsend plan provides, and now the gentleman is cutting the amount down from $200 to $100.
>
> Mr. Hoeppel: I am advocating $200 per month pension. I admit that I am suggesting as a substitute for the sales tax a taxless plan for raising the necessary revenues which should effectively answer the vociferous objection of those who would discard the plan because of the sales-tax provision.
>
> Mr. Blanton: He is cutting the pension half in two.
>
> Mr. Hoeppel: No; I am not cutting it half in two.
>
> Mr. Boileau: The gentleman is advocating a different plan.
>
> Mr. Hoeppel: I am advocating $200 per month.
>
> Mr. Boileau: It is not the Townsend plan that the gentleman is discussing.

[1] *The Congressional Record: January 15-21, 1935. Washington: The United States Printing Office. 756 pages.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. Hoeppel: What does the gentleman mean by the Townsend plan?

Representative Hoeppel, as I started out to say, must be charmingly vague. And only a congressman, although this is also unimportant, would have courage enough to sponsor a bill, and talk for an hour about it, and not know what the bill was. It belongs on Broadway, or in a talkie with Laurel and Hardy, but it's in The Record. On the other hand, lest I seem to be supporting the contentions of my friend in the mountains, things get buried in The Record that people ought to know about. There are, after all, a few intelligent men in Washington and sometimes they say things that deserve our attention. Senator Nye and his committee have done a good job showing up the pull-and-powder boys, and the Senator, when arguing for a continuation of the inquiry, read into The Record some fifty disclosures resulting from his investigation. Some of them, previously unreported or else neglected by the press, were:

That one member of the War Industries Board signed for the government contracts totaling more than $49,000,000 with the du Pont Corporation, in which he was a stockholder.

That the American and British submarine trusts ganged up on the South American countries, corrupting their officials, fixing prices together and paying speakers to scare the various nations of the south into a naval race.

That in Chile the Germans helped the British and American munitions people by putting in a dummy bid on a powder factory.

That one American gas company used convicts in a South American country [Chile] as experimental victims of its gases.

That the financial and sales interconnections of many of the foreign munitions makers are so close that an embargo imposed by only a few nations does not hurt them—they can have their allied companies supply orders; that it was in this way that the du Ponts got around the Chaco embargo.

That during the last war, our biggest machine-gun company [Colt] tried to lower its taxes by claiming that it had been active all over the world before the war and knew the war was coming and prepared for it.

That the War Department has no figures showing the cost of supplying a purely defensive army with munitions.

That the munitions companies, through friendly officers in the War Department, were informed about the selection of delegates to the Geneva conference in 1925, a month and a half before the American people were told who they were.

That the following table, for which Moody's is the authority ("Analysis of Investments from 1912 to 1919") shows how much profit there is in war—for some people:

	Average Profit, 4 Years—	
	Preceding War	*During War*
Scovill Manufacturing Co.	$655,000	$7,678,000
Niles-Bement Powder	656,000	6,146,000
Atlas Powder Co.	485,000	2,374,000
Hercules Powder Co.	1,271,000	7,430,000
Republic Iron & Steel	4,177,000	17,548,000
International Merchant Marine	6,690,000	14,229,000
General Motors	6,954,000	21,700,000
American Smelting & Refining Co.	11,566,000	18,602,000
Utah Copper	5,776,000	21,622,000
Anaconda Copper	10,649,000	34,549,000
United States Steel	105,331,000	239,653,000
Bethlehem Steel	6,840,000	49,427,000
du Pont	6,092,000	58,076,000

I would like, in conclusion, to recommend this series to all those persons who like to keep up with what is going on. It is sometimes hard to find out what is going on, because of the confusion and obfuscation, but, anyway (and this I know from experience) The Record is very good for starting fires.

HAMILTON BASSO.

Class Poem

To the memory of a friend who graduated with me from the German-English Academy.

They found him sitting in a chair:
continual and rigid ease
poured downward through his lips and heart,
entered the lungs and spread until
paralysis possessed his knees.

The evanescent liquid still
bubbling overflows the glass
and no one hears the telephone
ringing while friends and strangers pass.
(Call taxis, wake the coroner,
police; the young ex-millionaire
is dead) Examine unpaid bills,
insurance blanks and checks unfold
from refuse in a right-hand drawer
to read before the body's cold,

Lifelike, resembling what we were,
erect, alert the sun-tanned head:
polo or golf this afternoon?
And night, the country club or bar?
—drink down to end all poverty,
two millions gone,
and stir no more.

Because I know his kind too well,
his face is mine, and the release
of energy that spent his blood
is no certificate of peace,
but like a first shot heard in war.

And not for him, nor you, nor me
that safe oblivion, that cure
to make our lives intact, immure
old debts and keep old friends.

Even in death, my lips the same
whisper at midnight through the door
and through storm-breaking hemisphere,
rise at that hour and hear my name.

HORACE GREGORY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Washington Notes

Continuing the N.R.A.—Decline from Greatness —Relief, Roosevelt and Richberg— Some Advice to Labor

THE NEXT important event on the administration's calender will be the long awaited announcement of its plan for the continuation of the N.R.A. It is now being rumored that an agreement has finally been reached, and it is possible that by the time this dispatch appears the plan will have been presented to Congress—along with another encouraging little message from the President, telling us for the nineteenth or twentieth time that the good features of the inspired experiment must be permanently preserved. There has been so much bunk, bluff and bluster about the reorganization of the N.R.A. that it is difficult to take it seriously. What prevents me from taking it seriously is my complete conviction that the plan approved by the President will not go through Congress in anything like the shape approved. I base this belief not only on the fact that the N.R.A. is the most controversial, unpopular, irritating and mistaken of all the New Deal experiments, but also on the obvious weakening of Roosevelt's strength in the Senate.

This notable decline from his former eminence is the most interesting development since the first of the year. Before the opening of the present session of Congress, the majority of the Democrats in both branches was so huge and the prestige of the President so great that there was general agreement among observers that opposition to the administration program was futile and that Mr. Roosevelt would get whatever he wanted—with the single exception of the N.R.A. This instrument of recovery was so broken, bent and otherwise busted that it seemed almost impossible to restore it to any effectiveness. Some of Mr. Roosevelt's closer friends in the Senate, including members of the progressive group, felt that any attempt to revive it along old lines was futile. The belief was fairly general that Mr. Roosevelt would have to make large concessions to win a continuation of the N.R.A., and that whatever plan he proposed would be taken over the bumps by the Senate.

There is no reason to change that view. On the contrary, its strength has been increased by recent happenings. I do not particularly refer to the rejection of the World Court protocol. That can be explained in so many different ways, ranging from devastating administration ineptitude to the irresistible popular power of the Hearst-Coughlin-Rogers-Long combination, that it could not be used as a yardstick to measure White House influence in purely domestic affairs.

The treatment of Roosevelt's five-billion-dollar work-relief bill, however, is a very different matter. The whole of the administration recovery-relief program for 1935 is practically based upon this measure. The President regards it as vital that he should have not only the full amount asked, but the full powers as well. These latter, it must be admitted, are more sweeping than anything else on the record. At first there was but slight doubt that the whole bill would go through in its original shape. It did so in the House. The Senate, however, proved to be far less docile. It is not too much to say that those sections of the bill relegating sweeping control to Mr. Roosevelt were emasculated in the Senate Committee, and, furthermore, the sum asked only missed being cut in half by the narrowest margin.

It is probable that some of the eliminated paragraphs may be restored on the floor of the Senate, and administration leaders profess confidence that, no matter what happens, what they really want in the bill can be put back in the conference committee. Probably they are right, but it is nevertheless true that within his own party and among his own friends an opposition has developed that has taken the President by surprise. It will require all the pressure he can apply to prevent it from becoming effective. Aside from the amount, the feature of the bill that he regards as most vital is the one authorizing him to pay a wage on public works above the scale of the dole but below that of private industry. This has been described as the heart of the whole plan. It happens, however, to be the feature most offensive to organized labor and is the one upon which the hardest fight will be made.

While the labor leaders want to avoid an open break with the President, there is no disguising their bitter disappointment with him. This arises from the part he played in the Automobile Code negotiations, and from a very deep resentment toward both Mr. Donald Richberg and Mr. Leo Wolman—particularly the latter. Exactly why the labor representatives should be shocked to find Mr. Richberg taking the industrial point of view in these negotiations I am at a loss to understand. From the day his selection as head of the National Emergency Council was announced, Mr. Richberg's leanings have been only too plain. In every one of the numerous speeches he has made since that time, he has dealt with the situation from the industrial angle. He came out flat-footedly against the thirty-hour-week bill, and in every possible way he has stressed the importance of restoring business confidence and encouraging industry. Hence the expressions of shocked surprise coming from labor argued either obtuseness upon the part of its leaders or inexcusable negligence in not reading Richberg's public utterances. In any event, organized labor got the short end in the negotiations, and the promulgation of the code by the President left them with a feeling of having been sold out by their friends. They should have known who were their friends from the start. To assail Mr. Richberg after the code has been agreed upon and approved by the President is futile.

At this writing, the labor forces are doing two things: first, they are girding their loins for a real fight to pass the thirty-hour-week law, and second, their leaders are trying to arrange an audience with Mr. Roosevelt, to go over the whole labor situation with him. They will, I think, get their audience and they will come out of it with the renewed conviction that Mr. Roosevelt is the friend of organized labor and not at all to blame for Mr. Richberg. As for the first, all I can do is to offer the unsolicited advice that if they succeed in passing the thirty-hour-week bill, they had better have the votes to override a veto.

Washington. T. R. B.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Other People's Money

News for Mr. Whitney—The Stock Exchange and Industry—The New Ordeal—Retiring Political Foes

MR. RICHARD WHITNEY, the president of the New York Stock Exchange, is trotting out once more the stupid old bogey that hindrance of the exchanges is holding up the heavy-goods industries, since it is only a free, untrammeled stock exchange that draws capital into industry and makes it go.

Mr. Whitney still has not discovered what has happened in this country since 1929. Someone ought to tell him. It might be suggested to him that there is a depression outside of Wall Street; that millions of people realize they were rooked by Wall Street and the Exchange; that the public is thoroughly on to the Exchange and to him, and that now even the brokers themselves have risen to approve the criticisms of the Exchange that its critics have been making for years. Mr. Whitney, who managed to injure the Stock Exchange so much through his imperviousness to new ideas and his amazing attitude toward Congress, has now shown his capacity to get the Exchange out of a hole by giving the job of selling it to the public to a gentleman—a former college professor—who recently revealed what goes on inside his head by writing a magazine article entitled: "Labor: Sanctified Parasite." Imagine the New York Stock Exchange thinking of labor as a parasite. That is too funny even for laughter.

However, on the question as to how much capital the Stock Exchange brings into industry, students at Amherst College, under Mr. Colston Warne, professor of Economics, have just made a most illuminating study. They took the reports of industrial corporations' securities issues brought out and reported monthly in The Commercial and Financial Chronicle from 1925 to 1931, inclusive. The total amount was $16,709,500,000—quite a tidy sum. This included stocks and bonds. Now these securities were issued for all sorts of purposes: exchanges of securities, mergers, promotions, refunding, and to effect new financing to create productive capacity or provide working capital. And out of this great total, in those seven years, including five of the most inflationary years in our history, the whole amount brought in by sales of securities for productive capacity and working capital was $1,765,000,000. This is at the rate of $252,143,000 a year. In other words, the total amount of actual new financing in America provided by the sale of securities was less in each of those years than is provided by the government now in a single month as emergency expenditures.

And remember, this refers to all corporate financing. The total thus provided by issues listed on the Stock Exchange was, of course, very much smaller. The study does not divide these securities into stocks and bonds. But if we had that figure we would see that perhaps less than half the total was provided by the sale of stocks, the type of security in which the vast speculative operations of the New York Stock Exchange specialize.

Where, then, does the money come from for our corporate financing? Not, as I have tried to point out before, from public financing through listed stocks, strange and unbelievable as this may seem. The pretense that industry is financed in any important degree through the speculative machinery of the exchanges or the sale of stocks is just a piece of unmixed bunk. Yet it is a piece of bunk that no one will examine and that everyone seems to swallow like a hungry trout taking a fly.

To sum up: if the exchanges could be restored to their "freedom," to the wild, unrestrained activities of 1925 to 1929, with billions in shares flooding the nation and billions of dollars of public credit flowing into the exchanges, and all the investment bankers bowling along at the old pace, the actual amount of real new financing to industry that they would provide would be not more than an average of $250,000,000 a year. To provide this simple assistance our banks and corporations had poured more than eight billion dollars in brokers' loans into the markets. And the return to industry in the way of new financing on that was only a little over three percent.

In the course of a brief visit to Washington I found a good many seams showing in the New Deal, which now threatens to become the New Ordeal. The most commonly held opinion was that Roosevelt was losing his cunning. So many bad breaks could be accounted for in no other way. The bad strategy of a first trial of strength on the World Court and the defeat; the ostentatious slap in the face to labor on the Automobile Code; the blow at the Newspaper Guild in the Jennings case; the pressing of the wire merger, which is developing odors; the bitter revolt on the relief bill, far stronger than the public has an inkling of; Chester Davis' "bloody purge" of the "radicals" from the A.A.A.; the growing resentment among independent Democrats and their insurgent allies over Farley's performances and the rather pungent fumes that arise from Farley's burlesque blunder with the stamps—all these things have given edge to the blades of the discontented members of the Senate and even of the more subservient House. Furthermore, when the industrial reports for January are all in, they will not help the situation any.

The new Federal Reserve bill has in it, perhaps, only one provision in which the administration is vitally interested. That is the clause that provides for compulsory retirement of Federal Reserve Board members at seventy. The present set-up of the Federal Reserve Board and system now contains nearly everything the administration wants. But it needs control of the personnel. The Board is still packed with hold-overs from the Coolidge and Hoover days. The administration merely needs a few vacancies to enable it to obtain its dominion over the system. This, with the reforming of the open-market committee, will give the Treasury that control over the machinery of the system that will enable it to protect itself against any further exhibitions of independence among the bankers in the matter of buying government bonds. This phase of the matter has been strangely overlooked. As usual, of course, this is just another patch on our ramshackle banking system. The administration persistently refuses to deal with the large problem of a completely overhauled banking system.

JOHN T. FLYNN.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Shostakovich Opera

"LADY MACBETH OF MZENSK," the opera by the young Soviet-Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich, recently presented in Cleveland and in New York by the Cleveland Orchestra under Artur Rodzinsky in collaboration with Anna Leskaya, Ivan Ivantzov, Yasha Davidov and the principals and the chorus of The Art of Musical Russia, Inc., is a work fitting into a new category of pieces for the lyric stage. This is the category of didactic operas, operas resulting from the manipulation of the musico-dramatic form in the intention of making that form bring home certain abstract truths. To this category belong the fairly recent "Lehrstück" of Paul Hindemith and the more recent "Jasager" of Kurt Weill. "Lady Macbeth" is the latest specimen of the genus, and also the most bulky. It is a long four-act work for a sizable vocal ensemble and a grand orchestra augmented by extra brass and percussion.

The particular truths that Shostakovich wishes it to impress upon us are two. The first of them, in his own words, is "the unhappy condition of women under the old regime," especially those who, "set by fate in gloomy and miserable surroundings and belonging to a merchant class which was hard, greedy and small-minded, led sorrowful and pitiable lives." The second, one unacknowledged but plainly proclaimed by the work itself, is the triviality and the ridiculousness of many of the passionate and tragic expressions of the libido consequent, in the young composer's eyes, upon the bourgeois economic and social system, and taken most seriously by the bourgeois world.

To achieve his purpose, Shostakovich, in collaboration with an author named Preis, has set before us an illustrative text derived from the famous novel of Nicholai Lesskov, "Lady Macbeth of Mzensk District." The heroine of the novel is a powerful woman who, demoniacally possessed, generates death wherever she turns; and this heroic figure Shostakovich and Preis, to begin with, have transformed into a sort of social victim. They have eliminated her deviltry. They have stressed her helpless subjection to the males of her family and to her own maternal love for her lover. They have concentrated their by no means abundant store of human sympathy entirely in her, and surrounded her with the grotesques of low-class persons in bourgeois clothes. Thus, their Katerina Izmailova is an ignorant but richly fibered creature helplessly enmeshed in a deadly milieu and "driven to crime" by it. We see her, married to a weak member of a mercantile family, and childless, and tyrannized over by a jealous and lecherous father-in-law, bored by her idle, empty existence, and readily succumbing to the assault of an ambitious clerk. After her father-in-law has gotten wind of the intrigue and had the clerk lashed within an inch of his life, we see her feed the old man rat-poison in a dish of mushrooms, and stonily watch his agony. When her husband discovers her lover in her bedchamber, we observe Katerina help the latter strangle the intruder, hide the corpse and return to bed with the clerk. Katerina and her paramour are arrested during their wedding, and sent to Siberia for life. On the eastward march, the man takes up with a prostitute, and robs and humiliates Katerina for her sake. The merchant's wife, in final despair, seizes the girl and drags her down with her into the river.

Besides transforming the small-town Lady Macbeth into a social victim, the authors have transformed her tragedy into an action occasionally resembling a Punch-and-Judy show, or a biological exhibit, or something very apart from ourselves, in which grotesques dressed in the civilian togs of the '40's reveal swollen lusts, more or less ludicrous and nasty, through expressions and actions more or less abrupt, exaggerated, ugly and ridiculous. Then, to this half-pathetic, half-satiric drama, Shostakovich has coupled a score deflating at times humorously, at times cruelly, the passionate, erotic, religious, tragic expressions of these violently possessive bourgeois puppets. To only one soloist has he assigned a few lyric musical expressions that touch our emotions sympathetically: the prima donna. To the rest, he has given expressions that, ironic, burlesque, humorous, move us to laughter or contempt, but never to emotional participation; and again and again his orchestra makes loud fun of the characters and their situation. If emotion overtakes his expression from time to time, he rapidly deflates it; and his largely descriptive score characterizes his personages and his situations with more coldness and contempt than they warrant. Take the musical representation of what is going on behind the bedcurtain in Scene III of Act I. The situation concerns two healthy human animals in rut. But Shostakovich's symphony, distinguished by its repeated trombone glissandi, is of a cynicism that makes that other musical description of a similar event, the comic introduction to "Der Rosenkavalier," appear almost idealistic. Still unsatisfied, Shostakovich follows this brutal hubbub with a passage of flatus-like sounds from the horns. Only during Act IV does he entirely quit his externality and let himself fully feel the situation; then, he sings in typically plangent Russian tones.

Thus, "Lady Macbeth of Mzensk" exposes its doctrine, thanks particularly to Shostakovich's talent for sonorous musical characterization, and his unusual theatre-sense. Yet the opera cannot be said to inculcate its somewhat conflicting lessons with very great impressiveness, or even to excel in its own category, an inferior one, poor in human feeling. To begin with, its "truths" themselves are pretty generally suspect, and promptly awaken skepticism. The conception of "social victimization" is repellent to decidedly individualized existences and the feeling born of them, since it is a rationalization impelled by the wish to remove from the individual's shoulders the individual's greatest pride, his self-responsibility. The conception of the contemptibility, triviality and inanity of feelings and expressions of the libido labeled "bourgeois" is equally subject to immediate challenge, since a very little feeling and experience are sufficient to inform the human being that nothing completely seen and felt is ever trivial or inane and nothing not completely seen and felt can be said to have been seen. One is tempted to believe that even in the U.S.S.R., where Shostakovich's "truths" are said to have a sort of official sanction, they are not widely accredited.

Besides, his delivery of his conflicting lessons lacks forcefulness and deep interest. Shostakovich's characterizations are frequently insufficiently musical; and in actual musical quality and structure, his long and complex score is mediocre. Much of the material is stripped, strong, modern; the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

composer strives throughout for strength and severity of line. But the strength he achieves is superficial. His material remains extremely heterogeneous in style, and anything but rich in either fine or powerful ideas. Melodies of some length do appear from time to time, but Shostakovich seems to lack a rhythmic sense: where he strives for sustained expression, as in the scene of the rut and the scene of the beating, or in the interludial *passacaglia,* the music soon grows static and monotonous. For all its "humorousness," the music leaves one cold; at utmost "interested." Save during such exceptional passages as Katerina's soliloquy at the beginning of Scene III, Act I, or the close of the hallucination scene, or the *hopak* of the drunken peasants, or some of the final act, the pleasures of the evening flowed almost entirely from the excellent performances of the singers. One finds oneself suspecting that besides being a very young man, Comrade Dmitri is too weakly endowed with fellow feeling, and too muddled, to be highly effectual even in the domain of didactic art. PAUL ROSENFELD.

Movies: Pay No Attention

I HAVE been trying to get a picture that is worth reviewing, for the last two weeks, and hereby throw in the towel. What, for instance, is there to say about "David Copperfield"? The producers have made all the details of it—the famous names, the awful expense, the insurmountable surmounted—so familiar to everyone, including the reviewers, that there is really only one thing left to mention in review: "David Copperfield" presents as many characters and situations as possible out of a novel that is very long, very inclusive, very famous and very bad; it runs for well over two hours, and is a pretty straight bore. "The Good Fairy" is much better stuff, having quite a lot of honest pleasure in it. I could wish that the true comic capacities of Frank Morgan and Reginald Owen were not so often overlaid with bogus histrionics (partly writing, partly direction), and that Herbert Marshall were not restricted to being so sheerly well bred (Oh I *am* so soddy). But Margaret Sullavan is, most of the time, entirely lovely, and if she isn't an actress I wouldn't know it, that is the way things are between Margaret Sullavan and me. In the end the picture suffers mainly from good fairyism: it is a bold and technically successful screen adaptation, but look at what they had to adapt.

Alexander Korda's "The Scarlet Pimpernel" isn't so bad either. It certainly puts the French Revolution in a bad light, what with Leslie Howard tying knots in the French Ambassador and simply baffling him by a tendency to vanish up chimneys. But although the film tends to defeat itself by poor continuity and unintentional burlesque, Mr. Howard and Merle Oberon are attractive figures. With a clear-headed, drastic screen adaptation, something might have been made of this, for the theme is exciting and the production is in general well managed, especially in the photography.

If these two are bearable but not worth turning aside for, then what can be said about "The Enchanted April," "Wings in the Dark," "Clive of India," "Bordertown"? The first is typical Ann Harding; the second is a sky opera with good air photography and terrible emptiness; the third is dilly-dally biography with elephants and Ronald Colman; and "Bordertown" is a complete dud, barring the presence of Bette Davis and Eugene Pallette. These films could be talked about for hours, and who would listen?

But this will very shortly get us all down, and we had better turn for a minute to something interesting, such as Variety's mid-year box score for true critics, just out. Every quarter Variety lines up the leading daily reviewers and gives them their report cards, having kept a careful check on how the critic seemed to like a picture as against whether the picture seemed to make money. By this standard his review is either "right" or "wrong." If the critic saw thirty pictures and liked thirty pictures, and ten of them were box-office headaches, all he can bat with Variety is .666, *Variety is sorry.* If the thirty he saw and liked were winners, he would do 1.000, but don't worry: the highest average listed is only .824 (awarded, by an odd stroke of fate, to Variety itself: nice going).

So there they all are, Variety, the nine New York critics and the four Chicago critics, all in black and white, and their relative worth carried out to three decimal places. And all one of them has to do if he wants to find out whether he is a good critic, is look himself up in the list. Incidentally, all he has to do if he wants to *be* a good critic, is keep his ear to the ground for rumors, his eye peeled for double-truck advance ads and his nose out for the way films are going financially before they break in New York—as reported weekly in Variety. It is absolutely wonderful. Of course, there is no provision for registering such subtle shades as whether a winning film in which the critic has detected immortal tragedy turns out to have been a Max Fleischer short or the trailer for "Babes in Toyland." But it is still wonderful.

And this is not in any spirit of mean derision either: the whole thing must be quite an incentive to good work, to say nothing of heightened interest all around, and if I thought for a minute that Variety had heard of The New Republic I'd write in like a shot and no stopping me: Dear Variety, How'm I doing, signed Anxious. In the general excitement I am even betrayed into nervously throwing around a few prizes myself. The first, to be known as the Great Ivory Prize, will be pinned on the following exhibit from Variety's own calendar of current movie releases, now in its second appearance and about due for a third: "'Babbitt'" (Variety says, describing the movie) is from "Upton Sinclair's 'Main Street.'" Prize is awarded for most boners in fewest words. Score: words, 5; bones, 4.

I'm afraid this review is going to get inconsequential before long, but I tried to find a good movie—I must have seen twenty-seven. "Devil Dogs of the Air" was the main disappointment. It is not only mildly harmful as an incentive to combat by sea and air, but silly and dull, completely wide of reality. The underlying suggestion is that a Marine is a cross between Strangler Lewis and the perfect knight. But Marines, outside of a tendency to shine their brass buttons, are people, and there are no people here. Everything is subordinated to the usual Hollywood version of fleet and air maneuvers—including the friendly enemies of the piece, James Cagney and Pat O'Brien, who deserve something a great deal better. The doings of the animals in "Baboona" (a pretty dull film) really have more of both sense and interest. OTIS FERGUSON.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter to the N.A.A.C.P.

SIR: I am sending you herewith a self-explanatory letter to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, signed by sixteen writers, editors, journalists and educators.

New York City. HARRY BLOCK.

[ENCLOSURE]

Mr. Walter White, Secretary,
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,
69 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

Dear Mr. White:

In The New Masses of January 8, 1935, Miss Martha Gruening has given an extensive and detailed account of the trial and conviction of George Crawford, a colored man, charged with murder in Virginia, and of his defense by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Her attack on this defense is so serious that we find the silence of the N.A.A.C.P. in the face of her charges even more incredible than the charges themselves.

Either Dr. Gruening, who is a lawyer as well as a journalist, has misstated the facts or else Dr. Charles Houston, dean of the Howard University Law School and chief defense counsel, has mishandled the most elementary rights of his client.

If Dr. Gruening is right, then a possibly innocent man is serving a life sentence for the sake of what seems to the N.A.A.C.P. an improvement in the interracial relations of the South. On the other hand, if the N.A.A.C.P. is innocent of having sacrificed the interests of its client to a mistaken notion of social expediency, it seems to us that it should clear itself of these charges by answering them in equal detail in a public statement.

In view of the vital importance of the issue, we are giving this letter to the press.

(Signed) Sincerely yours,

LOUIS ADAMIC, CHARLES ANGOFF, CARLETON BEALS, HARRY BLOCK, STERLING A. BROWN, RALPH J. BUNCHE, JOHN CHAMBERLAIN, EMMETT E. DORSEY, E. FRANKLIN FRAZIER, HORACE GREGORY, LOUIS HACKER, ABRAM L. HARRIS, SHEILA HIBBEN, SUZANNE LA FOLLETTE, BENJAMIN STOLBERG and HELEN WOODWARD.

Dr. Beard and the Profit System

SIR: Professor Beard's argument in his article on "The Blessed Profit System" [The New Republic, December 26] deserves to be pilloried as that of a man afraid to face an issue and then using the threadbare devices of dialectic to convince the world (and in part himself) that there is no issue to face. Professor Beard has not always been like that. I remember his courageous resignation from Columbia University in order to pose the issue of academic freedom after Butler's dismissal of two pacifist professors. I remember also that when several students, stirred by Professor Beard's example, urged some of the other liberal lights at Columbia to generalize the protest for academic freedom, the latter used Professor Beard's present argument about social relativity and change to prove that academic freedom varied from age to age and from individual to individual and really didn't exist at all as something worth fighting for. . . .

One can't compel a man to be courageous, but one can burn away the dialectical underbrush that serves as a cover for his timidity as well as a trap for the unsuspecting. Let it be said once and for all that anybody who tries to raise the issue of verbalism on the ground that concepts are rigid and abstract, whereas concrete reality is fluid and changing, is guilty of the sheerest subterfuge. Since the day when Heraclitus on one side and Zeno and the Eleatics on the other first raised this contrast, human reason found ways of dealing effectively with the most fluid of realities. The mathematician, for example, invents the concept of a variable, and then poses static individual values for the variable as a means of studying its evolution.

If we apply this procedure, how absurd do Professor Beard's contentions become! Is he trying to argue that the property institution is a variable through the ages? Very well. That fact doesn't prevent us from knowing what we mean when we ask whether a particular form of the property institution (namely capitalism, or ownership of production instruments) should or should not be maintained. Or is he trying to argue that capitalism or the profit system is the variable and that what gives way are the objects available for profit (*e. g.*, chattel slaves, public utilities before government control, etc.)? Very well. But it is *a question of fact and not of metaphysics* to determine whether it *is* a variable, that is to say, whether the abolition of slave profit, the change to "prudent investment" in utilities, etc., have significantly affected economic life, or whether on the contrary they have been as irrelevant to the basic tempo of capitalism as are the annual changes in women's fashions. If the latter case is true, the profit system is distinctly not a variable but a constant cause, and not all the Heraclitean dialectic in the world will make it otherwise.

If reason is not used to prevent thought, there is not the slightest difficulty in framing an objective definition of the profit system—to wit, that it is a system of social production with the use of capital, whereby increasing productivity and a geometrical profit mechanism go hand in hand with the inevitable result that the system breaks down *physically*, not morally, because not enough purchasing power is released. Add that the illusion of soundness which the system necessarily presents during the preliminary period of building up a capital plant has served to implant the idea of the normalcy of geometrical profits (so much so that Professor Beard regards the 6-percent compound interest in public utilities as a renunciation of profit!), and add also that the political state as an instrument of democratic social reform has been practically dismantled during the period of the upswing of capitalism, and you begin to understand the seriousness of the situation now confronting Western civilization. The profit motive, denied its outlet in increasing production, has turned cannibalistic, taking a toll from starvation and restriction of production, while the state stands by and plays the priest at the ceremony of human sacrifice.

BENJAMIN GINZBURG.

Long Island City, N. Y.

Replies to Anna Wallace

SIR: The article on fascism at the University of California which appeared in The New Republic of January 9 portrays President Robert Gordon Sproul as an administrator who has completely capitulated to reactionary pressure. As one who is fairly familiar with the situation in Berkeley I must say that this is quite unfair to him.

That persistent efforts are being made here by extremely conservative individuals and groups to force the college mind into straitjackets is correct. As director of the University Y.M.C.A., I have, during the past fourteen months, been compelled to spend a great deal of time mobilizing liberal opinion which would support the campus "Y" in the policy it continues to maintain of allowing all student groups, even though one of them be communist, to utilize our facilities for meetings. I happen to know well that President Sproul has repeatedly stood his ground with courage in the face of vigorous attempts to encroach upon academic freedom at California. I doubt whether any state university president has paid a heavier price during recent months in a sustained effort to stand against fascist trends. He has battled against heavy odds. Instead of being ridiculed and excoriated, many people in California who are devoted to the American tradition of liberty feel that he should be commended and supported.

Berkeley, Calif. HARRY L. KINGMAN.

SIR: Congratulations on your article on the University of California. As you would expect, newsstands around the University were sold out the day the issue appeared. . . . However, there is an error of fact that should be corrected. It deals with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

attack by some students using tear gas on other students. The object of the attack was not an anti-R.O.T.C. meeting but two students who were selling The Student Outpost, organ of the National Student League. Also the date of the attack was about two years ago, not less.

Berkeley, Calif. AUBREY GROSSMAN.

A Call for Mass Protest

SIR: The executive of the Austrian Social-Democracy with headquarters at Brünn, Czechoslovakia, has forwarded to me the enclosed protest declaration. . . . I have been requested to gather the signatures of prominent American men and women who are willing to lift their voices against the tyranny of a regime that is stopping short of nothing. . . .

Only international mass pressure will succeed in saving these prisoners, who are now in the hands of the Fascist victors. Many of your readers will certainly welcome an opportunity to support our action. They are asked to send their protests to the Representative of the Austrian Social-Democracy, 15 Union Square, New York City.

DR. A. S. LIPSCHITZ.

New York City.

[ENCLOSURE]

The Austrian government is preparing high-treason proceedings against Major Eifler, Colonel Löw and more than twenty workers who formerly were section leaders of the Schutzbund Republican Defense Corps.

These men were arrested in February, 1934, before the outbreak of the Vienna revolt. They were arrested at a time when the Heimwehr started its armed insurrection against the Democratic Constitution of Austria. They were arrested in order to prevent their calling upon the loyal Austrians for the defense of the Republican Constitution.

Arrested before the outbreak of the February battle, they had no part in the street clashes. They are now accused of having prepared these fights. Indeed, they kept stores of arms and ammunition for the defense of the Constitution; and now they are facing trial at the hands of those who assembled and stored weapons for the forcible overthrow of the Austrian Constitution. Certainly, the cynical manner in which justice is abused as the instrument of vengeance against the defeated adversary cannot be surpassed.

The respect of the civilized world for these heroic men is all the greater in view of the fact that the Austrian government had offered them immunity if they would serve the cause of fascism. Now they are tried simply because they refused to sell themselves and their beliefs.

Only a few weeks ago the foreign governments supported the fascist government of Austria by granting guarantees for an Austrian state loan and stating again their willingness to safeguard the independence of Austria. Now more than ever it is the duty and the obligation of the civilized world to protest against the contemplated legal murder that is an insult to the moral conscience of civilized people everywhere.

Realist

SIR: The article "China Behind the Headlines" in your issue of January 30 is, basically, fair and realistic, though the feelings and prejudices of the author shine through a bit too obviously. However, your editorial comments in the same issue under the heading "The Week" commenting on Japanese activity on the eastern border of Chahar, seem to me to be contrary to your own principles.

As realists, you must recognize that the economic condition of the Manchurian people has been greatly improved under Japanese guidance. As humanitarians, you must applaud the tremendous saving in life in the "seized" provinces since Japan wrested control from the murderous rule of the War Lords. As a champion of national justice, you must commend the Japanese for "freeing" the Manchurians from Chinese domination and setting a man of their own blood on their throne.

Manchuria is not and never was a "part" of China except during the few centuries that Manchus ruled the Chinese, so surely your feelings cannot be based on a desire for national justice. And even from the point of view of American trade, a stable, "energized" Manchuria, even under Japanese sponsorship, is a better market for the products of our factories (except the munitions plants) than the demoralized hell hole of banditry that existed before.

I, too, am against Japanese expansion in northeastern Asia. But not for any of the reasons that you give. I am against Japan's actions because with her increase in power, with her augmented resources, she becomes an ever greater menace to our own national security and economic well-being. Possibly, of course, you are animated by the same reasons as I, but are using more subtle weapons in your attack. Only, noting the frankness and honesty of your stand on most questions, it would be surprising to find you resorting to emotional hypocrisy in this case.

JOHN H. YEAMAN.

Laredo, Tex.

The Coming Jewish Elections

SIR: May I call to your attention the active preparations which are now under way for the organization of American Jewry, individually and collectively, for participation in national democratic elections on April 29, 1935.

These elections are designed to create a mandated body representative of all sections and all groups of opinion among American Jews for the purpose of considering and solving the many Jewish problems in this country. In addition, these elections will serve to arrange for American participation on the projected World Jewish Congress scheduled to be held in August of 1935. This is the second time in the history of the American Jewish community that national democratic elections have been attempted—the first elections having taken place in 1918, immediately after the close of the World War.

DR. JOSHUA L. GOLDBERG.
National Director, American Jewish Congress.

New York City.

Extracts from Letters

THE Pharmacists' Union of Greater New York writes: "Before the inception of the Pharmacists' Union of Greater New York two years ago, the drug clerks in this community were being paid an average of $20 per week for from sixty to eighty hours of exacting and responsible work. This despite the fact that they had to have from three to four years of college training and four years of practical experience for the doubtful privilege of slaving under the above conditions. After two years of painstaking labor, the Pharmacists' Union overcame, among other obstacles, the professional conceit drummed into the heads of the pharmacists' clerks by their employers and college professors. The drug journals contributed to our difficulties by continually shouting "pharmacists are too ethical, professional and simon pure to align themselves with unions." At first, most clerks had a general apathy towards concerted and organized coöperation with other clerks and took an attitude of remoteness towards labor organizations. However, in spite of all these difficulties, the Pharmacists' Union succeeded in organizing the clerks of New York City into a cohesive mass of enthusiastic men who responded to its call for a general strike in the Bronx, in October, 1934. The result of this strike was an overwhelming victory for the Union.

"The demands won for all the clerks of the Bronx were a $32.50 minimum salary for a fifty-four-hour week for registered pharmacists, a $23.50 minimum salary for junior pharmacists, union recognition and compulsory arbitration."

The Social Repertory Theatre, 5 East Nineteenth Street, New York City, writes: "May we call the attention of New Republic readers to the formation of a coöperative theatre whose objective is the production of plays of definite social content. The Social Repertory Theatre is seeking plays on social themes, preferably dealing with the contemporary American scene, and requests that playwrights address them at the above address."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mother Broadway

ONE CANNOT doubt that in art and one's artistic experience there is almost as much pleasure in seeing what a thing is not as in seeing what it is. That does not mean anything negative; it means the process by which we take what is present and project from it what is not present; so that the presence of what we get is illuminated by the absence of what, also, we might get.

Simple minds in the theatre are likely to put such critical remarks as these down to spite or sourness; they want whole-cloth excellence, rooting for the team, or else some toothsome roasting. Simple theatre minds, while they may take delight in what they know is good or may rejoice in what they do not know is bad, do not enjoy this process of synthetic perfection. They have a wholesome distaste for anything beyond the problem of what they themselves like and dislike. In sum, for them either conjecture or esthetics is undemocratic. We have come to the point now, it would seem, where nothing is less democratic than to remember that there has ever been anything better than the latest theatre outlay that we have "contacted"—sic—or to suggest that there could be anything better. Besides, what is meant by better?

"It's You I Want" (the Cort Theatre), an Americanization—bless us!—by George Bradshaw of a farce by Maurice Braddell, I thought, was mildly pleasant, not without laughter, in the stock-company style. At least it was a sort of old-fashioned rest from the increasing bourgeois earnestness about ideas, or rather about selling ideas theatrically. Everybody in this play was, for example, in an unchaste hurly-burly rather than a pseudo-Marxian, pro-or-anti-labor, Freudian, or what-not, mess, full of deep import.

For a series of ifs about "It's You I Want," it may be worthwhile to begin by saying that Mr. Earle Larrimore, after mourning through a number of Eugene O'Neill plays, and growing pallid as the revolutionary journalist in "Biography," does not in this case by any means suggest a London Don Juan. Bad casting, in sum, begins at the start to damage the play. And Miss Cora Witherspoon, who to me is one of the crashing delights in our theatre, breezy, often chic in one way or another, and making noises in their way unbelievable, was—her role also—poorly thought out. If she had been, for example, one of those garden-loving English ladies, given to draperies and garlands, as poetic and haunting as their own delphiniums or sneezewort, a hat sweeter than Romney's voracious red-lipped matrons ever wore, we should have had something truly funny to think about. Such a flowing and flowered lady's perturbations, in the midst of those surprises and indignities that climaxes require, would have been not only more credible as Don Juan's enchantress, but also good farce comedy; since there is nothing more ironic and farcical than an excess of the poetic, vapid and rapturous seen in a gross predicament.

There were many agreeable empty things about this farce, which is saying a great deal. One of the things—besides the inadequate casting of Mr. Larrimore as the London Don Juan and the unconvincingness of Miss Witherspoon, as she stood, in the role of the uxorious, as it were, mistress—one of the things that cool an average audience today from "It's You I Want" is the manifest artificiality of the piece. This is nothing against it, but rather to its credit. Our audiences are more and more spoiled in their demand for simple naturalness. This is to say that, not knowing what they do want, they think they want what they can talk about with some degree of plausibility; for any goose can compare the fiction with the reality. Every farce, however slight, every circus even, is a help against such people in the theatre as think "Dinner at Eight" important reality.

In their newest offering, Miss Lynn Fontanne to some extent, with the reddish wig and spectacles on her eyes, and even more Mr. Alfred Lunt, because his role allows for more of it, have helped the stage in this release from actuality (or what the average incapable person recognizes as his incapacitated observation of experience.) To take the case of Mr. Lunt, from almost the first moment of his performance, when he is going about among the hotel guests without speaking—it is very clear that he has, as an actor, decided on the full, objective method. What he does in the part of the Russian waiter at Point Valaine is stamped at once as not straight acting. By straight acting we may say is meant a certain presentation or, if you happen to be good, projection—of yourself in a role. Sheerly yourself, with little make-up, with all your known characteristics—or even mannerisms—you enact a role. It is a form of direct presentation, of more or less straight exhibitionism, trusting to the audience to delight in you yourself *per se*. You are free, that is, to be yourself as much as you like, and the nature of the role must express itself through your nature. You are rid of stage accessories; you do not transform yourself outwardly; you do not wear a mask that is not your own.

It all hinges, however, on a democratic or popular theory. The actor personally and the hero createdly are on an equality. The trouble with this is that, human weakness being what it is, you are apt to be yourself and nothing else. Zest of exhibitionism remains, direct exhibitionism. Sometimes we have, through the actor's power and personality, playing that conveys a temperament of significance as applied to the role undertaken. In many instances we have mere tedious or overrepeated personality; all the assets of the character enacted that might have braced matters somewhat are removed. In a sense the freer the actor is of external items in his performance, the more intense it has to be, since nothing is so binding as liberty. The leaning of both actors and audiences in these latter years to straight acting has increased; and this is one of the reasons for the banality, vulgarity, amateurishness and trashy journalism of the New York theatre.

Mr. Lunt has done a significant service to our stage by stating this waiter role in stage terms that are recognizable outside of the player himself. Details characteristic of the role accumulate. The actor himself is screened from us behind technical and character details; and in himself he is enlarged through merging himself into what counts, and paints, and challenges comparison and recognition. We have not the actor himself, we have a translation of him into a stage creation. Alfred Lunt is the waiter, but the waiter is not Alfred Lunt. This approach to a role is what our Broadway acting fundamentally most needs.

STARK YOUNG.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS IN REVIEW

The Long View

I WAS A little surprised to read the passenger list of the "Mohawk" and find that Vincent Sheean wasn't on board when the steamer sank. It would have been like him to be there; he always had a nose for scenting out disasters and cataclysmic changes. Of course it was part of his newspaper job to report them after they happened, but the curious thing was that they began to follow him around and burst in his ears when he least expected them. He would go somewhere to spend a quiet vacation or to rid himself of one of the novels that were endemic in his system, like typhus in Manchuria; suddenly there would be a crisis and Sheean would be the only American correspondent on the spot.

Here are a few of his experiences during eight years as a very roving correspondent: 1923.—Reports the Separatist revolt in the Rhineland from behind the barricades. 1924.—Goes to Italy for the Matteotti case and watches the birth of the totalitarian state. Gets arrested in Spain by Primo de Rivera. 1925.—Makes two separate expeditions into the Rif, during both of which he is the only foreign correspondent with Abd-el-Krim. 1926.—Across the desert to Persia, just missing the coronation of Reza Shah Pahlavi. 1927.—Sees the last days of the Hankow government and the defeat of the Bolsheviks in China. Goes to England by way of Peking and the Trans-Siberian. Returns to Moscow on November 7, the tenth anniversary of the Revolution and the day on which Trotsky was arrested after attempting a coup d'état. Tries to rescue an Italian friend from Lipari. 1929.—Visits Palestine to rusticate in a Zionist farm colony and finds himself in the midst of riots and pogroms. Files his last newspaper dispatch.

These cosmopolitan adventures form a great part of Vincent Sheean's new book,[1] and he writes about them with fire and candor. He has a clean narrative style, a sharp eye for color and incident, and at the same time a fair intellectual grasp of the forces operating beneath the surface. He draws portraits of some famous men he interviewed—Poincaré, Abd-el-Krim, Borodin, who was a sort of revolutionary saint, and T. V. Soong, the honest liberal who couldn't make up his mind; in each case the subject comes alive. But this record of men and events in the great world is not Sheean's real theme. Mingled with it, colored by international crises and at times casting light on them, is another story, a purely individual drama of ambitions and ideas, the "Personal History" of the title. It is this drama that makes the book vastly more appealing than the usual war correspondent's memoirs of things romantically seen and dangers escaped by the breadth of a keen Damascus blade.

The drama grew out of his search for a comprehensible answer to the problem of the relation between the one and the many, between himself and the tumultuous history he was reporting day by day. He was not satisfied to look on cynically. He wanted to know what things meant and how they affected himself—in his own words, "to give this unique possession, this one life, somehow, a relation to the world of which it was a tiny segment—to attach it and articulate it, so that comprehension might eventually light up the darkness in which it had to be continued." Like millions of people drifting through post-war society, he wanted to find a reason for living.

It was in Hankow that he glimpsed a possible answer to his problem. When he reached the city in May, 1927, it was the headquarters of the Kuomintang government, which technically was controlled by its more radical members. Foreigners were convinced that a new Communist state had come into being. But already Borodin, the Russian advisor to the Kuomintang, knew that the Chinese revolution was smashed; he was trying to hold the fragments together, fighting desperately but without ever losing his superhuman calm. Sheean was deeply affected by what he heard and saw in Hankow. "Here for the first time," he says, "I began to approach the fundamental meaning of those vast disturbances that had fascinated me (in part unconsciously) for years—began to be able to discern the general under the particular, to take what Borodin called 'the long view.' In my first meeting with the Bolshevik philosophy in action (even in rather circumscribed action), I was disturbed by the precision with which it answered the questions I had begun to think unanswerable. . . . Whether the Bolshevik solutions were the correct ones was another matter, which might take a long time to determine."

But at this moment Sheean complicated what had been a purely intellectual process by falling in love with one of Borodin's assistants, a red-headed American girl named Rayna Prohme. She came from his own part of the country, had the same educational background, laughed at the same sort of jokes; but for years she had been living among ideas and activities to which he was a stranger. Meeting in New York or Paris they might have had a trite love affair. Meeting in Hankow, in the offices of The People's Tribune, they developed a strange unphysical relationship in which desire was completely transformed into dialectics, into a consecutive argument between two ways of looking at the world. It was hedonist against Leninist, bourgeois against proletarian, but also man against woman. The argument included curious but natural and entirely convincing alternations of belief. At one time, in Moscow after the fall of the Hankow government, Sheean felt that he was a convinced revolutionist ready to follow Rayna anywhere; a few weeks later, after she had decided to join the Communist Party, he was fighting "tooth and nail to get her away from her own essential center—to recall her, by whatever means, to the half world in which I wanted to keep on living."

I shall not try even briefly to describe the rest of the drama, except to say that Rayna or Rayna's spirit won in the end, but not until two years after her death. Finally, as a sequel to some unhappy adventures in Palestine, Sheean was ready "to admit that she was right, that hers was the only comprehensive view, the nearest thing to 'a long view' that I was likely to know." To me the most impressive feature of the story is that besides being an extraordinarily interesting personal document it is also, by strict standards, a work of art. Sheean has written several novels which he says were pretty bad; I am willing to take his word for it. But this autobiography, with a few names changed to give it the appearance of fiction, would certainly rank among the good novels of this decade. It contains the outline of a tragedy which, if competently prepared for the

[1] Personal History, by Vincent Sheean. New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company. 403 pages. $3.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stage, would be better than any of the recent plays. The truth seems to be that most of our novelists and dramatists have allowed life to get ahead of them; they have dealt so often with the trivial, the formless, the typical, that they seldom have courage to present "the long view" or to present a situation in which love is resolved "into the largest terms of which such personal emotions are capable, related to the whole life of mankind and the eternal efforts of the human spirit to find its own place in the universe."

MALCOLM COWLEY.

World Under a Bell Jar

Chan Kom: A Maya Village, by Robert Redfield and Alfonso Villa. Carnegie Institution of Washington. 395 pages. $4.25, paper; $5.25, cloth.

FROM THE top of the big pyramid in Chichen Itza, one looks over gray jungle, level as the sea, boundless and desolate. Who can wrest a living from it? These brown-red masons in white pyjamas, carefully replacing the white stones of the pyramid, live in it. Their ancestors built this sacred city where perhaps 100,000 people lived. How do they live now? What traditions have come down to them from the great days a millennium ago? What have they taken from the Spaniards? What have they taken from the West? How do they mate and breed and bless and bury their dead? What does the world mean to them, and what is their philosophy of life?

Not many miles south and east of Chichen, under the jungle's gray roof, lies the village of Chan Kom, with its 250 Maya Indians. In the spring, great columns of smoke will be rising near it, as the brush is fired for the new *milpas*. Maize is the bread of these people as it was of their ancestors. No railroad or highroad penetrates here. Travel is on foot. A few citizens have been in Merida, the capital of Yucatan; only four or five have ever seen the sea. Mexico City is known by report, but "the state of mind can be referred to by no term more affirmative than 'awareness'; no patriotic activity ever asserts nationality." Because of the Americans digging at Chichen, the people of Chan Kom are perhaps more "aware" of the United States. It is known as a remote country of fabulous wealth and power; "it is the distant star to which the reform sentiment in Chan Kom has hitched the wagon of progress." But nobody in the village has seriously conceived of himself as visiting the United States. It is just as well. There is no depression in Chan Kom.

This village has been selected by Robert Redfield, dean of the Social Sciences at the University of Chicago, for intensive study. We remember his earlier study of Tepoztlan, an Aztec town near Mexico City. "Chan Kom" is a more ambitious project, more detailed, and even more interesting. "Tepoztlan" covered many economic and social aspects; "Chan Kom" covers every aspect. There is literally nothing about this community that we do not know when, reluctantly, we close the book. Here is the external world laid bare, tools, houses, maize culture, hunting, recreation, fiestas, skills; and the internal world, ideas about things, ghosts, superstitions, feelings about nature, the God of the Spaniards, and the more homely gods of the maize, of the bees, of the water holes.

When a man falls ill, he may call in the local shaman (h-man) to prescribe "hot" or "cold" foods—a strange and purely metaphysical distinction; or he may pray to the Catholic Deity; or he may procure medicines from the American doctor at Chichen. The economic pattern is simple and stable, barring drought, but the life of the spirit is far from simple, as paganism, medievalism and modernism pull the native's mental processes three ways.

There are no books in Chan Kom, "continuity with the past is made by oral tradition alone and history extends backward only to the time of the fathers of the older men now living." Before the time of the fathers there are only myths and stories. Once there was a race of men called Itza who had supernatural powers. They whistled to the stones, and the stones leaped into place to build the lordly cities of Chichen and Coba. The brush to be cleared for the *milpas*, burned without felling; firewood came to the hearth at a word, corn cooked itself. No one was wicked, all were wise. But the Itzas tried to build a tower to the very house of God. Destruction, flood, banishment followed. The Good Times were over. Now man lives in the Bad Times. He must toil for his living and his mind is dark.

This is all Chan Kom knows of its distinguished ancestors, though many of their skills and superstitions have come down from father to son, through the centuries. Today Chan Kom looks forward rather than back. Yucatan had a socialist revolution some years ago with the spirited Maya Indian, Felipe Carillo, at its head. The feudalism of the great estates was destroyed. The state took the land and gave much of it back in *ejidos* to the villages. Some of the men of Chan Kom fought in the civil war that raged through the jungle; fought for Carillo and imbibed some of his ideas. One such is now the leader of the village. He has repeatedly expounded the Chan Kom millennium: Everyone will live in a masonry house. Everyone will own cattle and a phonograph. A village coöperative society will market corn and fruit by means of a motor truck, collectively owned. All essential domestic industries will be performed in Chan Kom itself with no recourse to outside specialized labor. Chan Kom will be the head of its own *municipio*, a proud county seat. Then Americans will drive to the town in their automobiles to admire and further to dignify the foremost community of Yucatan. "We are going to make a pueblo like a pueblo of the famous Americans; all will be workers, even the women, just like ants; and if more land will be needed, the government will give it to us." Such is the leader's vision. To a degree, he is bringing it to realization. The children are going to school, masonry houses (whitewashed huts) are being built, the superstitions of the h-men are being slowly undermined, modern notions of hygiene are coming in from Chichen. All this is good. The coöperative motor truck will be good. But the march toward the American pueblo, 1935 model, had better stop right there. American pueblos, wallowing in debts with a quarter of their population on relief, leave something to be desired as utopias for self-supporting Indians.

It is hard to praise sufficiently the scope, the scholarly detail, the magnificent presentation, with charts, maps and tables, of this study. Furthermore, it is only one of a series of studies, which are to compare the penetration of Spanish and Western culture from village to village across the peninsula. At one end will be a suburb of Merida, with the Spanish influence at a maximum; at the other a remote village in Quintana Roo with pagan influence at a maximum. Chan Kom lies nearer the latter. Splendid as is Dr. Redfield's organization, we cannot fail to appreciate the cardinal contribution of Señor Villa, the schoolmaster of Chan Kom, who day by day patiently gathered the details that have made the description of this human microcosm so luminous and living.

STUART CHASE.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jews Into Exile

Road of Ages, by Robert Nathan. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 232 pages. $2.50.

THE FEET of the Jews of the world marching across Europe, across Asia, to the Gobi Desert. That desolate region, so distant that no echo of its horrors will ever be borne back to the West, has been allotted to the hated Jews, exiled from every nation. Gathered in one mighty company of millions, rich and poor, learned and superstitious, with a bewildering variety of speech and no bond other than that all are common victims of the world's madness, these reluctant refugees, leaving behind lost homes and precious memories that gradually pale with the advance into the desperate unknown, are as sad and brave a caravan as imagination ever contemplated. Eastward they drag their way, over the Carpathian mountains, across the Ukraine, into the Asiatic winter, harried by bands of police and students—what bitter irony in that word!—harried by cold, hunger and the wolves—less pitiless than men, since they kill for food, not malice—harried above all by the warring factions in their ranks. The former capitalists in the caravan, though now penniless and starving, are busy plotting to control the future state of Gobi; communists and socialists do battle on the barren plains by the Irtysh River as in the crowded streets of New York or Berlin; the mythical race of Jews remains divided at the end as at the beginning. We see them toiling up the ranges of the Tien Shan—"the last great wall, behind which stretched the endless wastes . . . the last hills beyond which history did not go." There they vanish, as the human race itself will vanish in some brief moment of geological time.

Such is the bare outline of Robert Nathan's "Road of Ages," a book enriched by strikingly diversified and realistic individual portraits blending into the mass picture, the whole presented with the author's wonted beauty of style, with the wonted undertones of pathos, irony and humor. To call this work a fantasy does injustice to its epic sweep, its grandiose allegory. Not the Jews alone are here driven into the desert; with them in their many-peopled ranks, where scientists, surgeons, poets and musicians struggle pitifully to keep the light within them burning, on into doubtful darkness move the values of our whole culture. That these values are today so fully embodied among the Jews that anti-Semitism necessarily involves a suicidal disownment of culture itself would be sufficiently evident even without the definitive example of Germany. Mr. Nathan is quite within his rights in taking his Jewish caravan as a symbol of the desperate lot of humanity itself. Every intelligent non-Jew will, of course, agree with him a hundredfold and will be grateful to him for so moving an expression of a fundamental truth.

And yet one cannot help regarding Mr. Nathan's defeatism as a little willful. Why should he attune his reverence for art and science to an accompaniment of ridicule towards social and political endeavor? He represents those who dream of a new and better form of society in Gobi as mere misguided fanatics. For all his internationalism, he leaves one with an uncomfortable feeling that he perhaps thinks Jewish bankers and communists ought to get together through their Jewishness—which, saving his presence, would seem remarkably like nonsense. Worst of all, he goes out of his way to emphasize *Russian* brutality toward the exiles as greater than that of the other peoples encountered on their journey—an attitude inexcusable in view of the Soviet record in the matter of racial persecution, as contrasted, let us say, with that of our own America. In a word, Mr. Nathan's philosophy lags behind his art. He recognizes the cultural values of the past but is curiously indifferent toward those of the future. Yet it is through the union of these—and only through their union—that the Desert of Gobi may still perhaps be avoided.

ERNEST SUTHERLAND BATES.

Humanizing Mr. Hoover

Hoover Off the Record, by Theodore G. Joslin. New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company. 367 pages. $3.

MR. JOSLIN'S title is a misnomer. A large number of his pages are given to the record itself, in long citations from Mr. Hoover's messages and speeches with which he vainly attempted to meet the crisis of 1929 and the following depression. That these untoward interruptions to our national prosperity occurred in consequence of policies Mr. Hoover had pursued in his business career and public life is no concern of Mr. Joslin, who entered the President's service as private secretary in 1931. For two years he and his chief toiled unsparingly to heal the nation by such allopathic remedies as form the pharmacopia of the regular practitioners. Mr. Hoover's capacity for work, and his readiness to exercise it, are part of Mr. Joslin's revelation off the record. Rising at six, he was on the job until eleven at night, and frequently broke his night's sleep by an hour or two of work. The other entries off the record concern Mr. Hoover's personal thoughtfulness and good humor toward those with whom he came into contact, his geniality toward the crowds of visitors with whom he allowed himself to be photographed, his joy in his grandchildren, his care of Bryan Untiedt, the boy hero of the Colorado blizzard, whom he wanted to reward by a visit to the White House without having him spoiled by the newspapers—in short, all

> His little, nameless, unremembered acts
> Of kindness and of love.

Mr. Joslin follows his chief's example in refusing to reply to the personal attacks upon Mr. Hoover that appeared during his term of office, dismissing them wholesale with the confession of the author of one of them that "it was a forgery and a fabrication." How this confession was obtained he does not state. Biased and exaggerated as these books were, it must be remembered that the theory of business enterprise was on trial, and it was pertinent to inquire what Mr. Hoover's background was in connection with it. At a time when the breakdown of the capitalistic order was enforcing the demand for social change, it was important for the country to know that Mr. Hoover did not consider it dishonorable to use funds entrusted to him for relief, to combat revolution in Europe. This most serious charge against Mr. Hoover is admitted in his forgotten campaign biography of 1920, and by his bouncing lieutenant, T. C. C. Gregory, in articles in The World's Work. Mr. Joslin defends Mr. Hoover's rout of the bonus army in Washington and Anacostia as the act of a brave man who scorned to pass the buck. Be it so, but Mr. Hoover must then take the responsibility for the ridiculous but tragic comedy played by General MacArthur, on his charger, with his supporting company of horse, foot, dragoons, machine guns, tanks and gas. It must be said that Mr. Hoover's love of his fellowmen had its limits.

ROBERT MORSS LOVETT.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

John Dewey's Credo

A Common Faith, by John Dewey. New Haven: Yale University Press. 86 pages. $1.50.

IN THIS small book, John Dewey undertakes to offer us "the naturalistic foundations and bearings of religion." He conceives of his work as have many other philosophers before him, that is, as a critique of religion aimed at purifying and upholding religious values. Dewey thinks that these religious values are obscured and thwarted by the traditional dogmas. He advances an original and weighty argument against their acceptance: by attempting to found the authority of moral ideals on some prior embodiment in an ontological realm, the various creeds only undermine the strength of those ideals, make useless an active faith directed toward their realization. The doctrine of revealed truth is not only contrary to our ideals of scientific knowledge; it is also opposed to the ethical ideals preached by the churches.

Thus religions in the traditional meaning of this word are rejected. But Dewey is not an atheist. He finds in experience an "irreducible" religious element, and this he proposes to maintain. Dewey names it "the religious"—an adjective as opposed to "religion," the noun. "The religious" is defined by its function. It has a triple role: to unify the self by an all-inclusive ideal of action, to unify man with the universe by a feeling of pious communion with nature, and to unify the individual with society and mankind. In this construction God does not disappear, but is redefined as the "active relation between ideal and actual." Dewey has no difficulty in showing that these unifying functions can be accomplished without "the necessity of resort to apologetics." He believes that the existing churches can survive their present crisis if they abandon all scientific claims and preach instead a faith of individual and social reformism, "a faith that shall not be confined to sect, class or race."

"A Common Faith" touches upon many interesting philosophical and sociological problems. A thorough discussion of this book would carry us beyond the limits of a review, but I should like to attempt a brief analysis of one fundamental issue that Dewey raises.

He ascribes the diminishing influence of religions on our life to their intellectual inadequacies. In order to disprove this absolute diagnosis, it should be enough to recall how many advanced scientists have recently seemed to go "back" to religion. The real cause of the disease should be looked for in the social role of religions, in their function. But contrary to what he does for "the religious," which is defined in functional terms, Dewey neglects to examine religions from the same functional point of view. Had he done so, he surely would not have to declare that, between religious values as he conceives of them and religion, there is an opposition "not to be bridged." For religions, too, perform a unifying function—of a special, religious sort. The serf and the lord, the worker and the capitalist, the poor and the rich, are spiritually united in God. Religious unity may be presented as an end in itself; in fact its function is to conceal real oppositions. Religion masks the social conflicts, consoles the slave by the promise of a transcendent compensation, justifies the master by superficial rites and attitudes.

One has no right to speak of "unity" without qualifying it. Otherwise it remains an abstract, metaphysical concept, an empty form. The unification accomplished by Dewey's "religious" is not essentially different from that accomplished by religions. It is a mere state of mind, a spiritual attitude. Dewey speaks of unification without analyzing the causes of division, as if division of man within himself and his separation from society and nature were not relative to a given social order, but something inherent and everlasting. There is a goal nobler and more inclusive of the highest ideals of mankind than the creation of spiritual oases in the midst of real struggles: this goal is the real unification of man in a classless society, and it can be attained only by practical revolutionary activity. The revolutionary will excludes religion, because instead of real unity it accomplishes only a pretense of unity, because it preaches a faith above classes, when, in order to bring about real unity, it is necessary to fight against one of the classes, the ruling class. And substituting "the religious" for religion does not change the situation.

NORBERT GUTERMAN.

A VIKING PRESS PUBLICATION

THE STORY WERFEL HEARD

In the summer of 1915, 5000 Armenian men and women made history. Facing exile which meant certain death, this band of simple, peaceful country people rallied to the summit of imposing Musa Dagh (The Mountain of Moses) and there, for forty days, struggled herocially against the might of the Turkish Empire.

In 1929, Franz Werfel, standing in the shadow of Musa Dagh, heard at first hand an account of this incident of the Great War. His author's mind recognized at once an epic theme.

Once more, the moving record of history was to be transformed into a living work of art.

For his hero he took Gabriel Bagradian, Armenian by birth, Parisian by education and inclination, who as the story opens, returns to his native land and, with annihilation threatening his race, leads these 5000 peaceful villagers up the slopes of Musa Dagh, to resist until death the Turks led by their war lord, Enver Pasha.

Simply, clearly, Werfel tells how the courageous little band dug themselves in, organized for battle, arranged a strange communal life, and, from a rock jutting out over the sea, flung a banner: "Christians in Need."

In prose which keeps pace with the excitement of his story, Werfel describes the mounting suspense of those forty days of constant struggle against the Turks, starvation and internal strife.

As for the overpowering climax, only Werfel can recount the happenings of that fortieth day when the Turkish forces gather for a final not-to-be-denied onslaught, and Gabriel, standing among the remnants of his decimated forces, hears the sound that rose from off the sea. . . .

Early last year, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* was published in Europe. Quickly the word spread that here was a work of literature worthy to rank with the truly great novels of our time. Since reaching America just before Christmas, it has won the endorsement of four book clubs and a critical reception of unique proportions. In ten weeks it has sold more copies than any other novel published within the last year. Today, it is talked of throughout America. Every day hundreds of new readers discover its excitement.
832 pages. $3.00

THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH

by FRANZ WERFEL

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Appeal to Reason

The new magazine, the **Appeal to Reason**, edited by E. Haldeman-Julius and Joseph McCabe, is devoted to telling the truth about Fascism and Catholicism. Beginning with the first issue, the **Appeal to Reason** brings its subscribers a series of 25 important articles by Joseph McCabe, gathered in Italy, Spain, Austria, Germany, Poland, Yugoslavia, Mexico, and Spanish America generally, describing the activities of the twin forces of reaction—Fascism and Catholicism.

The Appeal to Reason will give space to the following 25 articles:

1. The Fascist-Catholic Menace to Our Liberties. 2. How Catholic Law Strangles Freedom. 3. The Vatican and Fascist Italy. 4. Catholics in the U. S. 5. Rome, the Enemy of Education. 6. Rome's Scandalous Record in Spain. 7. Roman Catholic Roots in anti-Semitism. 8. Political Intrigues of the Vatican. 9. When the Pope Was King. 10. Why the Roman Catholic Church Opposes Birth Control. 11. Roman Catholic Aims in Fascist Germany. 12. True Roman Catholic Doctrine on Toleration. 13. What the Roman Catholic Church Has Done for Ireland. 14. The Roman Catholic Church in Mexico and Spanish America Generally. 15. The Roman Catholic Church's Mental Reservations and Lying. 16. Catholics and Crime, or Why Catholics Fill the Jails. 17. The Roman Catholic Church in Fascist Austria. 18. Celibacy, an Unscrupulous Policy. 19. Roman Catholicism in Poland and Russia. 20 How the Roman Catholic Church Gets Wealth and Power. 21. Are There Inferior Races? 22. Is Democracy Doomed? 23. Bunk About Ancient Wisdom. 24. How the Brain Works. 24. All About Bacteria.

LAST CALL! Act Today for Complete File

The Appeal to Reason contains 128 large pages—5½ by 8½ inches in size—bound in neat, attractive covers. About 60,000 words per issue. Legible type. Good paper. The subscription rates for this important quarter of world opinion and information is only $1 per year; $2 per year for Canada and foreign. A year's issues will contain about 250,000 words—for only $1. Truly a wonderful bargain for so significant a magazine. Merely write your name and address carefully on the margin and wrap this around a dollar bill. We will guarantee to begin your subscription with Vol. 1, No. 1, if you answer promptly. Remit by cash, postal money order or U. S. stamps. Add 10c to personal check. Address:

HALDEMAN-JULIUS PUBLICATIONS,

BOX A-52. GIRARD, KANSAS, U. S. A.

THE THEATRE GUILD *presents*
S. N. BEHRMAN'S play
RAIN FROM HEAVEN
with JANE COWL and JOHN HALLIDAY
GOLDEN THEATRE, 45th Street, West of Broadway.
Evenings, 8:30. Mats. Thurs. and Sat. 2:30.
EXTRA MATINEE, FEBRUARY 22, 1935

THE THEATRE GUILD *presents*
(in association with Charles B. Cochran)
for a limited engagement
ELISABETH BERGNER *in*
ESCAPE ME NEVER
by MARGARET KENNEDY
SHUBERT THEATRE, 44th Street, West of Broadway.
Evenings, 8:30. Mats. Thurs. and Sat. 2:30.

LABURNUM GROVE
J. B. PRIESTLEY'S Comedy
Starring **EDMUND GWENN**
ACCLAIMED BY PRESS AND PUBLIC OF AMERICA AND ENGLAND ! ! !
BOOTH THEA., 45th, W. of B'way. Eves. 8:30. | Week of Feb. 18th: Matinees Wednesday (50c to $1.50) Fri. (Wash'n's B'day) & Sat.

6th CAPACITY WEEK!
CHAPAYEV
"THE RED COMMANDER"
"A Classic!"—William Troy, *Nation.*
"Superb. . . ."—Andre Sennwald, *New York Times.*
"Possibly Representative Film should look out for it."—Richard Watts, Jr., *Herald Tribune.*
CAMEO—42 St. East of B'way Cont. from 9 a. m. | *English Dialogue Titles*

CONCERT AND RECEPTION
HANNS EISLER
MECCA TEMPLE, Sat. Eve. March 2nd, 8:15 P.M.
First New York Appearance Famous German Refugee Composer
1,000 Voices and Brilliant Supporting Program
Benefit Child Victims of Hitlerism | *Tickets: Rand School, Worker's Bookshop, Mecca Temple. 55c to $1.65.*

Primer for Pedants

A B C of Reading, by Ezra Pound. New Haven: Yale University Press. 209 pages. $2.

THIS BOOK might better have been called "The Advanced Comparative Philology of Reading." No wonder it is published by a university press: it is a characteristic production of Ezra Pound the professor—the eccentric, the capricious, the angry professor, to be sure, but still the capped and gowned doctor of letters. It is all about learning to read, and the point made with most emphasis is that in order to read any given writer with discrimination you must read some other writer or writers, and preferably in some other language. You cannot estimate Donne's best poems except in relation to Guido Cavalcanti; you cannot appreciate Chaucer properly until you have read the troubadours, and so on. It is as if Ezra Pound were consciously steering straight for the familiar dictionary definition of "pedantry." He remarks once, it is true, that men do not understand books until they have had a certain amount of life, and one knows well that Ezra Pound the poet believes this.

But the professor has the upper hand in this work, and there is almost nothing in it about the equipment in experience, in attained understanding, that is (truistically enough) the real A B C of reading. So the book is expressive of but one side of Pound's notoriously polygonal personality: perhaps that is why he is betrayed into saying such foolish things as that Golding's translation of Ovid is the most beautiful book in English; why he stumbles into such banalities as: "The reader will often misjudge a condensed writer by trying to read him too fast"; and why, for all his insistence on the connection between "Dichtung" and "condensation," he makes every observation some five or six times.

NEWTON ARVIN.

Letters from the Dead

Letters from Greenroom Ghosts, by John Mason Brown. New York: The Viking Press. 207 pages. $2.

MR. JOHN MASON BROWN, dramatic critic for The New York Evening Post, writes a book of letters supposedly from great theatre people of the past to certain modern, very much alive, fellow players. The idea is exciting and full of possibilities. Mr. Stark Young did it profoundly several years ago in his "Glamor." Mr. Brown acknowledges this debt in a graceful prefatory letter to Mr. Young.

In "Greenroom Ghosts" Mrs. Siddons writes to Katharine Cornell, advising her of some of the dangers that lie in the path of a premier tragic actress of an era. She implores her to have a care and not fall into any of the traps that could so easily sidetrack her from her destiny. In like manner Peg Woffington writes to Ina Claire, Christopher Marlowe to Eugene O'Neill, Sheridan to Noel Coward, and Inigo Jones to Robert Edmond Jones.

The dangers in choosing this delicate and difficult form are many and obvious. For one thing it is boring and tiresome to have people discuss themselves unless their point is sharply defined, unless their manner is electric. At times the point and manner are blurred in Mr. Brown's book. In the case of Mrs. Siddons to Katharine Cornell, for example, it is difficult to read through the vanity of the former-day actress to a clear-cut impression. The form, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pattern chosen, stands in the way of the writer's intention. On the other hand, in the letter of Christopher Marlowe to Eugene O'Neill the picture is vivid, the accuracy of characterization believable enough to make his remarks about himself interesting and thus to carry his critical appraisal of O'Neill to a more serious level.

The game of comparison has long been a favorite one with writers. The essayist, the biographer and the historian have all found worlds of material in observing this personage as such and such, and that one as so and so. But from these reflections there usually emerges, in so far as the effort is successful, some central point, some tone that lends to all a specific significance. Thus, for instance, Plutarch writing comparative biography turns out to be an important moralist. In Mr. Brown's book there are passages full of grace and wit and passages that, in themselves, entertain; but in choosing so elusive a medium as the personal letter, he often only thwarts himself and leaves the reader wishing for a simpler statement and more of a point. But the charming talk remains, the range of interest, the engaging approach.

BYRON MCGRATH.

Books in Brief

The British Way to Recovery, by Herbert Heaton. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 184 pages. $2.

HOW IS it that Australia, Canada and Great Britain have all made more progress toward recovery than the United States? If there had been a single patented and trademarked "British way to recovery," we might expect a reasonably clear answer. But Canada muddled along; England tinkered with its tariff and prodded its home agriculture; Australia undertook a comprehensive planned readjustment of costs and prices. Currency depreciation, the one policy pursued by all three, was also adopted by this country—although to be sure the British got the advantage of a head start. Here is a neat little problem in the increasingly important new field of comparative economics, and I had hoped that Professor Heaton would be bold enough to tackle it. He has, instead, preferred the simpler task of reporting. Nevertheless, his account is conclusive in showing that the British, especially in the United Kingdom and Australia, have been more successful in restoring conditions favorable to the expansion of a capitalist economy. Having lived up to more advanced standards with respect to both financial probity and social legislation, they have had fewer devils to scalp and no such imperative need as ours for thoroughgoing innovations. Their policies, definite and understandable to begin with, have been carried through without a general disturbance of business habits and expectations. Only when we turn to the politics of imperial preference do we meet a familiar turbulence and begin to find a patchwork of hectic expedients and conflicting action.

J. D. N.

Tarabas: A Stranger on This Earth, by Joseph Roth. New York: The Viking Press. $2.50.

This is a short philosophical and political novel by a man who, from the literary point of view, has done much better work. Tarabas, the hero of his new book, is a composite Russian of the transitional war period. He begins as a man of blind action and ends as a typical pre-revolutionary Russian, seeking his soul—*after* the Revolution. As a student, Tarabas has engaged in revolutionary activity and has escaped to America. He returns to Russia

"It brings an undying book to new life."—Carl Van Doren

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MONTAIGNE

Comprising the Life, told by himself, of the Wisest Man of his Times; his Adventures in Love and Marriage, at Court, and in War; his Travels; Tastes, Whims, and Opinions. Selected, edited, and largely translated anew by Marvin Lowenthal.

Montaigne left behind him an autobiography of unexampled richness,—not in biographical form but in isolated passages of self-revelation buried in his essays and less accessible works. A judicious selection and re-arrangement of these passages has given to literature a superb self-portrait in Montaigne's own words. Into his books Montaigne poured all the amazing wealth of his personality—his nonsense and his wisdom, his loves and his hates, his joys and weaknesses. Every page sparkles with his incomparable *joie de vivre.* $3.50

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO.

A new idea of TIME as a FACTOR IN ECONOMICS . . . a new theory of PRODUCTION based upon the quantity and quality of TIME; upon the physiology of fatigue, and upon "tolerance" . . . a new theory of DISTRIBUTION based upon the EFFICIENCY OF TIME

THE SCIENCE OF ECONOMY

BY LUDWIG KOTANY, Ph.D.

Written by a distinguished scholar, successful banker and business man, this book shows that the theories of the classical writers were based upon too narrow a sweep of human experience and upon ideas which are no longer true. He offers a new theory, based upon economic *facts*, which takes into consideration the tremendous advances in evolution, the physical sciences, social history, political science—in fact nearly every field of human knowledge. Of vast interest for every serious-minded reader. 719 pages. $3.50

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS 2 West 45th St., N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as a soldier in the War, killing without thought. The success of his unthinking ruthlessness ends with the October Revolution. He becomes a penitent pilgrim, who willingly undergoes physical torments. The Revolution has torn down his dream picture of Tarabas, the man of might. He seeks "reality"—not the reality of the October Revolution but that of Dostoevsky. He dies in a monk's cell. Roth seems opposed to the extremism of both the earlier and later Tarabas. He pictures a successful mediative way in the Jew Kristianpoller. It is the way of Roth's own half-hearted anti-fascism. Roth refused to be published in Nazi Germany because he was an "Austrian monarchist."

H. S.

A Man of Purpose, by Donald Richberg. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Company. $2.

Written when the author was a labor lawyer and political reformist, this twelve-year-old novel is roughly autobiographical. A young Illinois lawyer enters politics, fights for union labor against the railroads, loses a campaign for Governor as a progressive Republican. A privately evolved moral code helps him arbitrate his problems of legal ethics and procrastinate endlessly in deciding which of three women he loves. Richberg fills gaps in the novel by moralizing at length and stopping to say, in effect, "Now I am going to be frank, daring, self-revealing." But the philosophy of Richberg's purposeful man belongs, like his often cumbrous writing style, to 1922. Most of the issues it raises have been discarded, if not settled. And Richberg has likewise changed; the chapter of this book titled "A Radical Reborn" seems incongruous. This New Dealer would write a different novel now.

P. K.

The Revolutionary Emperor: Joseph the Second, 1741-1790, by Saul K. Padover. New York: Robert O. Ballou. 414 pages. $3.50.

Mr. Padover's spirited biography of Joseph II of Austria is without any question the best account that we have in English. It is scholarly without being dull, critical without being cheaply debunking, and always engrossing to read. Yet more readers will come close to accepting the above judgment than will accept without reservation all the interpretations of the author, including his basic judgment that Joseph was "one of the liberators of humanity." When the liberator is an absolutist, whether belonging to the enlightened eighteenth-century type or to any one of the current variations, we should scarcely be asked to rise en masse and sing hosannas in his praise or curse his enemies. But very few will put this book down without a deeper understanding and sympathy for the hapless monarch who tried to make philosophy the lawgiver of his realm and died, a heartbroken man, hated by those whom he had tried to aid.

L. G.

Contributors

J. M. KEYNES, the English economist, has held a number of executive and advisory positions with the British government. He is the author of several volumes on financial and economic subjects, including "The Economic Consequences of the Peace" and "Treatise on Money."

DAN FORREST TAYLOR lives in San Diego and writes that he used to be an ardent stamp collector. He has done newspaper work on the Coast and was, at one time, a Post Office employee.

HORACE GREGORY is the author of two books of poetry, "Chelsea Rooming House" and "No Retreat," and of a critical study of D. H. Lawrence. A new book of poetry, "Chorus for Survival," is scheduled for early publication by Covici, Friede.

PAUL ROSENFELD has written on a wide variety of subjects, but music remains his chief interest. He is the author, among other books, of "Musical Chronicle," "Men Seen" and a novel, "The Boy in the Sun."

STUART CHASE has written a number of books on social and economic subjects, including "A New Deal," "Mexico: A Study of Two Americas" and "The Economy of Abundance." His most recent publication is a pamphlet entitled, "Move the Goods."

ERNEST SUTHERLAND BATES lives in New York City, where he is an associate editor of The Modern Monthly.

NEWTON ARVIN, a member of the faculty of Smith College, is the author of a life of Hawthorne and has contributed critical articles to various magazines. He is now on leave of absence completing a new book.

BYRON MCGRATH has spent ten years in various departments of the theatre. He is currently appearing in Sean O'Casey's "Within The Gates."

The initials signed to the brief reviews are those of John De Witt Norton, Harry Slochower, Paul Keating and Leo Gershoy.

LECTURES

COOPER UNION
Dept. of Social Philosophy
(Formerly The People's Institute)
IN THE GREAT HALL
8th Street and Astor Place—At 8 o'clock
Admission Free

Friday, February 22nd
EVERETT DEAN MARTIN
"Thomas More and The Dream of Utopia."

Sunday, February 24th
PROFESSOR IRWIN EDMAN
"The Grounds of Social Faith."

Tuesday, February 26th
PROFESSOR FREDERICK BARRY
"Science Vs. The Business Man and The Politician."

ORANGES FOR SALE

Oranges, sweet, juicy, sun-ripened on trees; picked, shipped same day. Delivered express prepaid, $3.50 bushel basket. Tangerines, $3.75; Grapefruit, $3.00. Satisfaction guaranteed. A. H. Burket, Sebring, Fla.

BOOKS

BOOKS and HEROES

America's contribution to the world are set forth in the biographies of her leaders.

History becomes living and vital when read in the light of its central figures.

Let your bookseller help you select books about the men who changed the world's thought.

AMERICAN BOOKSELLERS ASSOCIATION
"Remember Them With Books"

MAGAZINE

La Follette's
Great National Weekly Newspaper
"The Progressive"
Regular Price $1.50 Per Year

STARTLING FACTS suppressed by other papers are being exposed NOW! Inside story of the new 3rd party. Send 20 cents today for the next 12 sensational issues.

Special Offer
3 Months
-13- ISSUES 20c

The Progressive, Dept. M, Madison, Wis.

GRAMOPHONE RECORDS

MUSIC LOVERS— 100,000 of the finest records in the world on sale at 50c & 75c per record (value $1.50 & $2). The Symphonies, Chamber Music, Operas, etc., of BACH, BEETHOVEN, BRAHMS, MOZART, WAGNER, etc. MAIL ORDERS, CATALOGUE. THE GRAMOPHONE SHOP, Inc., 18 E. 48th St., New York City.

GENERAL

WHY BE DISCONTENTED? Or defeated by environment? Or depressed by loneliness? Write Box 434, Spokane, Washington. Enclose postage.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED